ACROSS / A15
Nobel Peace laureate: Only Filipinos can bring peace to Mindanao

WORLD / A22
Hopes for peace rise in Gaza as Palestinian death toll tops 1,000

BUSINESS / B1
Remittances rose 10.5% to $1.3B last November

BUSINESS / B3
Apple CEO Jobs takes medical leave till June

LIFESTYLE / D1
Paris-based Filipino designer is toast of fashion world

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Friday, January 16, 2009 ★ Vol. 24 / No. 39 online www.inquirer.net

ANDREAS NOTTER, Swiss

EUGENIO VAGNI, Italian

JEAN LACABA, Filipino

It's 'winter weather' in Baguio at 7.5 Celsius

By Vincent Cabreza and Khristine Love Vicente
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—THE FREEZING ILOILAI economy has resulted in sparse sponsorships for Baguio's centennial programs, and the local government is now relying on tourists who love the "winter weather."

IT'S WINTER A2

Ping urges Puno to run for President

By Michael Lim Ubac

AFTER CALLING ON RELIGIOUS LEADERS to save the country from corruption and moral decadence, Chief Justice Reynato Puno should now "rise to the challenge" and run for President next year.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a presidential aspirant himself, made the call yesterday, declaring he was willing to sacrifice his political ambitions and fully support Puno if he chose to enter the political ring.

Puno's chief of staff indicated the chief magistrate wasn't interested.

"The Chief Justice has time and again said that he is not interested in politics and would rather remain in the judiciary, where he continues to make great strides," lawyer Mickey Mosquera said.

Puno's term as Supreme Court justice will expire in May 2010, the same month when the presidential elections are due to be held.

In text messages and in a press statement, Lacson said he was throwing his "full support" behind Puno, calling him "the beacon.

PING URGES A4

3 Red Cross reps kidnapped in Sulu

No word on fate of Swiss, Italian, Filipino captives

By Ed General and Julie S. Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

JOLO, SULU—THE VISIT WAS meant to look at ways of easing conditions at the Sulu provincial jail—a job normally done by humanitarian workers of the Geneva-based International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) anywhere in the world.

It resulted in the kidnapping of three ICRC workers yesterday by suspected members of the dreaded Abu Sayyaf gang in broad daylight right at the Sulu provincial capital.

Taken at gunpoint were Andreas Notter, 36, a Swiss national who headed the ICRC branch in Zamboanga City; Eugenio Vagni, 42, of Italy; and Filipino engineer Jean Lacaba, 27, according to Senior Supt. Julasirim Kasim, Sulu police chief.

The three were stuffed inside their vehicle with the Red Cross insignia just after they had conducted an interview with jail officials at the Area Coordinating Center, a conference hall in the middle of

I RED CROSS A8

DOUBLE EXPOSURE Louis "Barok" C. Biraogo and former Rep. Jacinto "Jing" Paras (center during their press conference on Thursday at Somerset Millennium Hotel, Makati City, on the disqualification case that would unseat Negros Oriental's incumbent representative who defeated Paras' wife. EFREN EN

CHIEF JUSTICE TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE! Chief Justice Reynato Puno calls out for the moral force to manifest itself finds resonance in religious and civic circles, the Palace and a challenge for him to run for the country's highest office.

Puno nemesis insists it's all about the Limkaichong case

By Philip C. Tubeza and Norman Bordadora

LEAVE THE NITTY-GRITTY TO SARE.

A businessman whose revelations about an election disqualification dispute have sparked talk of a move to oust Chief Justice Reynato Puno has guaranteed a following that is prepared to take his cause to cyberspace and campuses across the country.

Supporters say the immediate objective of the campaign backing Louis Biraogo in the release of what he calls a Supreme Court "deci-

PUNO NEMESIS A2

Flood of applicants crashes 'the world's best job' website

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA—ONE GREEK woman promised to do all of Australia's laundry and clean up after the kangaroos. An Australian apparently had a tattoo advertising her love of the Great Barrier Reef etched onto her arm. And a few people just took off their clothes.

Desperate to snag what's being

FLOOD A10

Palace, bishops welcome Puno's call

By TJ Burgonio and Dona Pazzibugan

MALACAÑANG AND THE Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) welcomed Chief Justice Reynato Puno's call for religious leaders to take an active role in "redirecting the destiny" of the country as it was suffering from moral decadence.

"The administration shares the need for and relevance of people's concern, involvement and vigilance in ensuring governance that is upright and accountable," Secretary Gabriel Claudio said yesterday in a text message.

Puno made the remarks about the need for a "moral force" amid talk of a plot to impeach him for an unpromulgated court decision on an electoral dispute. He said it was not the country's laws that could solve the country's problems but the moral system.

Claudio said it was unfair to link the Chief Justice's call to an impeachment move against him.

"It's unfortunate that the Chief Justice's call is being harnessed by one sector daily obviously in the context of a so-called impeachment move against the Chief Justice, which the Palace repeatedly said it knows nothing much about, much less support," he said, without mentioning the Baguio.

Archbishop Angel Lagdameo of Jaro, CBCP president, said the Catholic Church hierarchy had always called for morality and integrity in government

PALACE A6

Palace backs DOJ stand vs Marcelino

By Christian V. Esguerra and Jocelyn R. Uy

MALACAÑANG DOES NOT FIND ANYthing wrong with the statement of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez that Maj. Ferdinand Marcelino's participation in operations of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) is "unconstitutional."

Marcelino is the head of the PDEA Special Enforcement Service that arrested the so-called Alabang Boys in a buy-bust operation in September last year.

Anthony Golez, deputy presidential spokesperson, yesterday said Gonzalez's opinion was "constructive" and in fact should prompt the PDEA to review its policy of tapping soldiers as ear-

PALACE A6

World Bank bans 3 RP firms tied to graft

By Michaelo V. Reyna

THE WORLD BANK HAS BARRED three Philippine and four Chinese construction firms from bidding on its projects due to alleged corruption in collusion with government officials.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the World Bank said its investigation had "uncovered evidence of a major cartel involving local and international firms bidding on contracts under Phase 1 of the Philippines' National Roads Improvement and Management Program, known as NRIMP 1."

As a result of the World Bank findings, the Philippine government has temporarily disqualified all seven firms from participating in bidding for any public construction project, whether funded by state revenues or by local or foreign lenders.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. said the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) would decide in 15 days if the firms would be permanently disqualified.

The Philippine firms facilitated by World Bank are the Cavite Ideal International Construction and Development Corp. and CM Pancho Construction Inc.

WORLD BANK A18

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Mostly cloudy with occasional light rains while Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will have cloudy skies with isolated thunderstorms. Generally moderate winds over Northern and Eastern Mindanao.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Kalibo/Boracay	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Area	Partly Cloudy	San Jose	Cloudy with Rains
Dagupan	Partly Cloudy	Dumaguete	Cloudy with Rains
Legaspi	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga Area	Cloudy with Rains
Virac	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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SUERTRES

7	1	2

EZ2

7	8

9	2

0	1

4	

SUPERLOTTO 6/49

5	12	17	34	35	46

P39,923,715.60

Prosecutors shelve mass leave

By Norman Bordadora

STATE PROSECUTORS IN Central Luzon have decided they did not need a "break" after all.

Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño yesterday prevailed on colleagues in the region to stay on their jobs and not take a week-long recess home to their hometowns for the

"It wasn't easy," Zuño said of his being able to convince Regional State Prosecutor Ana Sinahon in Iloilo chief to

"The prosecutors are very emotional, [with] low morale," he added.

The prosecutors led by Sinahon had threatened Wednesday to go on mass leave in support of the four junior officials, Zuño's defiance, who had been ordered to take an indefinite leave by President Macapagal-Arroyo while the bribery controversy in the "Alabang Boys" drug case was being investigated.

"This is to protest how we are being treated," Sinahon said.

"We have been restricted on most matters as prosecutors. It is a shame that while we give due process even to hardened criminals, such is not given to," he said.

Not only governmental prosecutors in Central Luzon but throughout the country protested the President's order to Zuño, Justice Undersecretary Ricardo Blancaflor and state prosecutors Phillip Lacaya, Miguel Ladaga and John Resella to go on indefinite leave in connection with bribery allegations in the Alabang Boys case.

They also lambasted the nomination of Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) officials in the lower order despite their involvement in the investigation of the drug case.

In a news forum yesterday morning, Zuño and Central Luzon prosecutors led by Sinahon were going to go en masse leave to protest.

"If the prosecutors in Central Luzon go en mass leave, the regions in Mindanao and the Visayas will follow," Zuño had said.

In the afternoon, Zuño called a news conference to announce he had talked to Sinahon and convinced him to forgo the plan.

Maybe for a day

Zuño said he had called up Sinahon after he met with Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez earlier in the afternoon.

For his part, Gonzalez said in an interview also yesterday afternoon that he would sanction prosecutors who go on mass leave to the prejudice of the public service.

"They might violate civil service rules, adverse public officials can join mass actions but not to the detriment of public service. Besides, you can have a mass action during lunch time," Gonzalez said.

But Gonzalez said he was inclined to study if a "one day mass leave" was acceptable under the law to give the protesting prosecutors a way to save some face.

"That may be tolerable if it would be just for one day just to express pent-up emotions," he said.

Sinahon justified warned 76 of the 91 public prosecutors in Central Luzon were going en mass simultaneously for up to six days to protest the "unfair criticism" of the DOJ in the Alabang Boys case.

But in Sto. Michael Dolorazo Santiago, government prosecutors have no right to stage a strike.

Santiago, a former trial court judge, said yesterday it was illegal for prosecutors to go en mass leave.

She cited the 2007 Supreme Court decision in On case of Reyes v the National Labor Relations Commission in which the high tribunal "ruled that a strike by government employees is illegal, when it is contrary to specific prohibitions of law." With reports from Michael Lim Ubac in Manila and Rosette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

Gov't to privatize Boracay 'gateway'

By Kristine L. Alave

THE GOVERNMENT IS SET TO privatize the Caticlan airport this year and two companies, one led by businessman George Ty-ong and the Ayala Group, have expressed interest in acquiring the airport which is the gateway to the popular resort island of Boracay.

The government will bid out the airport, valued between P2 billion and P3 billion, early this year, said Tourism Secretary Ace Durano.

He said the National Economic and Development Authority would be completing the process of privatizing Caticlan in the first quarter.

Durano said the government has expressed a similar line for the wrinkling firm under the P300 billion "resiliency" fund, one of the measures that the government has initiated to help the country weather the international economic crisis.

Super regions

Caticlan, located in Malay, Aklan province, is the first of the provincial airports to be privatized in line with President Macapagal-Arroyo's policy of creating economic "super regions" to spur development.

The last step in privatization—North Luzon, Metro Luzon, Central Luzon and Mindanao...will be the beneficiary of a massive infrastructure development program that will include the construction of airports, seaports and railway systems and other projects. Funding for these infrastructure developments will come from government and the private sector, and to a limited extent, overseas development assistance.

Durano said Tieng, who owns the local McDonald's franchise, has expressed interest in buying the Caticlan airport. He noted that Ty-ong's group had already bought hallways and Bias Bias golf resort in Boracay "so they have a stake already."

The Ayala Group has also "indicated interest" he added.

Durano said the plan is to decommission the present facility at Caticlan and build another airport on the opposite side of the airfield.

"They will have to stretch the runway to accommodate international flights," he said.

As it presently, Caticlan can only accommodate small airplanes that service regional routes.

Last week, a Zest Air plane executed the runway, injuring scores of passengers, underscoring the need for improvement in the terminal.

Gov't recovers ₱103M in telecoms dividends

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON Good Government (PCGG) yesterday said that it had recovered P103 million in cash dividends from Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC) shares preserved by Marcos-ill-gotten wealth.

PCGG Commissioner for Legal Affairs Jaime S. Sinoles said the commission received P103,889,220 in cash dividends on Wednesday from the Bank of Commerce. These cash dividends accrued on the 111,433 PTIC shares of stock registered in the name of Prime Holdings Inc. (PHI), which the Supreme Court declared ill-gotten by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos in January 2006.

"The recovery of these funds is a welcome development," Bautista said, adding that the PCGG, together with the Solicitor General, sees "relentless in its recovery efforts to fulfill its mandate."

Last year, the commission ordered to the National Treasury cash dividends accruing to P1.191 billion from the same shares.

With the newly recovered funds, the total amount of cash dividends recovered from the PTIC shares now total P1.294 billion, even as the PCGG expects to remit an additional P607,833,333 before the end of this year.

The cash dividends were deposited by PTIC with the Bank of Commerce in escrow pending government securities. They are included now in the government securities matures.

Under the law, all recovered Marcos ill-gotten wealth should be used for the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). As of Dec. 31, 2008, the PCGG has remitted P84.138 billion to CARP.

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Oil prices cut again

By Abigail L. Ho

OIL FIRMS AGAIN REDUCED PRICES OF gasoline, diesel and kerosene by 50 centavos a litre, three days after implementing the first fuel price rollback for the year.

Independent oil firm Eastern Petroleum Corp. was the first to slash its prices, followed by Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Chevron Philippines Inc.

Gasoline, diesel and kerosene prices have gone down since the year started, by a total of P1 a liter.

Only last Tuesday, motorists who lined up at filling stations paid less for their gas bills after oil companies began implementing a similar fuel price reduction scheme.

According to data from the Department of Energy, a regional benchmark Dubai crude clobbered to an average of $46 a barrel as of Jan. 12, from an average of $41 a barrel last month.

The price of unleaded gasoline, based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) futures, drove to an average of $46.50 a barrel from $41.50 while kerosene is being sold from P55.50-P58.44, also per liter.

Retail prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene products also increased to a P48 a liter average in the first 12 days of the month, from the December average of $41 a barrel.

MOPS-based diesel rose to an average price of $61 a barrel in the Jan. 1-12 period, from $41 a barrel last month.

Last year, oil firms brought down gasoline prices 19 times for a total of P10.50-P94.20 a liter and diesel prices 17 times for P10.30-P24.85 a liter.

Shell chair Edgar Chua said earlier the oil refinery would be making more frequent fuel price adjustments this year, to make its pump-set pricing more transparent.

"We aim to ensure constant implementing more timely weekly price adjustments so as to give current market conditions and provide greater transparency to pricing," he said.

With the price reductions, unleaded gasoline now sells for P48.95 to P50.05 per liter. The price per liter for diesel was pegged at P36.70-P41.50 while kerosene is being sold from P35.50-P40.44, also per liter.

2 Nigerian 'tourists' barred

By Jerome Aning

TWO NIGERIAN NATIONALS HAVE BEEN refused entry for carrying "questionable" passports and failing to convince immigration authorities that they have the financial capacity to stay in the country.

The Bureau of Immigration issued an exclusion order against Daniel Alamgan Awaze, 28, a football player, and Sunday Ochenio Ajaulo, 28, a businessman, after three days of investigation. The two were sent back to Hong Kong, their point of origin, last night.

Awaze arrived in Manila on Wednesday night at the immigration office, locking himself in a room, kicking at the wall several times and smashing a lamp.

Alma Ganotisan, officer in charge of the airport duty room for transient foreign passengers and those refused entry, said the Nigerian also made threats against other foreigners passengers staying at the room.

Ferdinand Sampol, the bureau investigations operations chief, said the bureau exercised its authority to exclude undesirable aliens.

"We hope this will be a lesson to all foreigners entering the country to comply with our guidelines," said Sampol.

He also sought to downplay the behavior displayed by the Nigerians, saying it was "understandable" when such incidents take place.

The Nigerians arrived on Jan. 12 from Hong Kong on a Cebgo Air flight. They told immigration inspectors they were tourists and wanted to see the Manila Festival to be held on that day.

However, airport security officers accosted them after immigration agents completed their Asian tour code and denied at them.

When questioned, the two were only able to show unofficial letters via e-mail. They were detained for investigation, during which it was revealed that they each had only $500 (about P23,600), which authorities did not consider enough for their planned two-week stay in the country.

In his report, Rody Pascual, head of the Main immigration office, said Awaze's passport had alterations on which Ajaulo's allowed name changes on the first page, which constitute important personal information.

Investigators learned that the two had obtained their visas from the Philippine Embassy in Cambodia.

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PLONING'S LOST OSCAR

Big drive falls short for RP film

By Rabon V. Nepales
Correspondent

LOS ANGELES—AN AGGRESSIVE AND well-organized campaign for an Oscar nomination fell short for the Philippines' "Ploning."

When the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced on Tuesday the nine films that made it to the next round of voting in the foreign language film category of the 81st Oscar Awards, "Ploning," was not one of them. The Philippine entry was one of the 65 that had originally qualified in the category.

The films on the shortlist are: Austria, "Revanche," Gus Spielmann, director; Canada, "The Necessities of Life," Jeremy Peter, director; France, "The Class," Laurent Cantet, director; Germany, "The Baader Meinhof Complex," Uli Edel, director; Israel, "Waltz with Bashir," Ari Folman, director; Japan, "Departures," Yojiro Takita, director; Mexico, "Tear This Heart Out," Roberto Sneider, director; Sweden, "Everlasting Moments," Jan Troell, director; and Turkey "3 Monkeys," Nuri Bilge Ceylan, director.

Aside from "Ploning," the Academy's short-list votes did not include such acclaimed films as Italy's "Gomorrah," which won the Grand Prize in last year's Cannes Film Festival; many the 2008 European Film Awards, including best film and best director and was expected to be a frontrunner in the Oscar race; Jordan's "Captain Abu Raed," Finnish "The Mermaid," Norway's "O' Horten," Argentina's "Lion's Den," Kazakhstan's "Tulpan" and Chile's "Tony Manero."

The "Ploning" team, led by director Dante Rae Garcia, actress Judy Ann Santos and executive producer Dado Gonzales, launched a well-organized campaign for the Philippines to land its first ever nomination in the highly-competitive foreign film language category of the Academy. Using novel fund-raising means, Santos raised the money needed to launch an Oscar nomination campaign.

It was the first time that the Philippines ever genuinely made a bid for a nod. Some prominent Filipino-Americans in Hollywood backed Santos and accompany her at most making a massive effort to bag an Academy nomination. But in a crowd that is devoted by Oscar voters, an increasing number of contenders are forced to launch expensive Oscar campaigns, which include ads in the major US newspapers and in the film trade publications like Variety and the Hollywood Reporter, cocktail receptions and other marketing tools.

It also takes a lot of money to hold so many screenings as possible to involve lot of Academy voters. The increasing cost of lobbying for an Oscar nomination is seen by critics as unfair to entries from developing nations with no cultish film organizations or companies to spend for their films to be noticed by voters.

Gonzales, Garcia and Serena Hotel Murray Heinemann, who is considered one of the dozen of Oscar campaigning, to run "Ploning's" campaign. Murray helped engineer the upset victory of "Crash" over "Brokeback Mountain" as Oscar's Best Picture in 2006. "For Your Consideration" ads of "Ploning" ran in Variety and the Hollywood Reporter, the entertainment industry's trade bibles.

RP baby, mother mortality among world's highest

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

EACH DAY 11 FILIPINO MOTHERS DIE IN childbirth due to poor maternal health care, according to the latest United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) study on risks faced by pregnant women and newborns.

Newborn mortality also remained high in the Philippines, with half of the deaths of those 5 years old and under occurring during infancy, the study said.

The Philippines is one of the 68 developing nations where 97 percent of all maternal, newborn and child deaths worldwide occur, it said.

"Around 11 Filipino mothers die every day or an estimated 4,300 every year due to severe hemorrhage, hypertensive disorders, sepsis and problems related to obstructed labor and abortion," said Unicef's State of the World's Children report for 2009.

"In the Philippines, the lifetime risk of maternal death is 1 in 140. About half of the deaths of Filipino children under five happen in the first 28 days of life," it said.

Lifetime risk

Among developing countries, a woman has a 1 in 76 lifetime risk of maternal death, compared with a probability of 1 in 8,000 for women in developed nations. In the Philippines, the lifetime risk of maternal death is 1 in 140.

The study said the Millennium Development Goal of improving maternal health was one of the goals "least likely to be achieved by the Philippines by 2015."

Unicef country representative Veronica Taylor, in a statement announcing the release of the report, said: "A huge effort is needed to improve public reproductive and maternal health services and educate mothers."

While the study commended many developing countries for making "excellent progress" in improving their child survival rate in recent years, it pointed out there had been less headway in reducing maternal mortality in the last 17 years.

Maria Ejercito: Gentle creature but tough as steel

By DJ Yap

TO STRANGERS AND CASUAL acquaintances, Maria Ilocandia Ejercito appeared to be the gentle creature, perpetually smiling as she greeted guests at the entrance door to the kitchen cooking her signature dishes (seafood and Laoag-style).

But to her closest kin, especially her favorite son, Joseph "Erap" Estrada, she was tough as steel, often giving the former president a tongue-lashing for every one of his indiscretions as a young man...or even as a fully grown adult.

She was a feisty homemaker, a stern mother, a doting grandmother and, most grandmother, an excellent cook, and an entertaining hostess, according to those who knew her.

Proudly called "Doña Mary," she died on Sunday at age 93.

Friends and family members who stopped in the church for her wake Wednesday night recalled little anecdotes about her.

For many, she was gracious and kind. But others were well aware she had a temper.

"When Erap was still mayor of San Juan, she would scold—even actors—even those she loved: he had been 'naughty,'" said Angel Gaoang, Estrada's media liaison officer. "Erap never answered back, and instead, would turn endearing (affectionate)."

"He was deeply devoted to her. That's why Doña Mary kept track of every little thing that he did. She knew everything, including his love affairs," Gaoang added. "But she also stood squarely for what was right—and legal."

Gaoang described the bond between mother and son as "very strong," citing several instances when a weak Doña Mary, lying in her hospital bed, would instantly regain strength whenever friends walked into the room.

"Even though she was already very frail, she would raise her arms and pat him on the back, as though to comfort him," he added.

Illarina, Doña Mary's eldest daughter, said she was "a good mother" who kept the family together in the face of hardships.

She was a Ilocandiana, but she took care of all of us. Even with her grandchildren she was always generous and kind," she said.

A close family friend, Gilo Hinampas@Gilgado, hailed sister of President Hinampas@Arroyo, described Doña Mary as a "very classic person. She is very charming, always smiling. She was the kind of mother I looked up to."

Former senator Ernesto Maceda, who came to the wake with his wife, said it was an honor Doña Mary had the "genuine influence" on Estrada.

"Erap would always joke that he was the black sheep of the family, and the only one who didn't finish college," he said. "The other he was elected mayor, then vice president, and president; he told his mother: 'Look, the black sheep just became president.'"

Doña Mary would be given her last rite but you could see there was a glint of pride in her eyes," Maceda added.

The former senator recalled Illarina Estrada's tearful reaction upon learning about his mother's death. But when he was told the Ilocano president had locked himself up in the room, Maceda told his staff to just let Estrada be.

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English no sign of being educated, says psychologist

THE NOTION THAT being fluent in English is a sign of being educated is strengthened, according to a De La Salle professor opposed to a House bill seeking to enforce the use and teaching of English to improve English-speaking proficiency in the country.

"There is no sound basis for that. It is somewhat naive to think that if you teach using English in academic, students will automatically be more fluent," said Dr. Allan Bernardo, a professor of cognitive psychology.

"Education goes beyond being able to speak a foreign language well. We need to answer that question," he said in a lecture at the University of the Philippines in which he critiqued two House bills that approach the issue of language instruction for the primary grades differently.

House Bill 3619, authored by Rep. Edcel Lagman, and one by Rep. Eduardo Gullas, authorize strengthen and reinforce the use of English as a medium of instruction in schools, particularly in elementary and high school.

Gullas was unable to attend the first part of the forum and another professor, Neil Zaragoza, outlined the salient points of his bill.

Under the Gullas bill, English and Filipino will be taught as separate subjects in elementary and high school.

"In addition to basic instruction, the use of English shall be encouraged as a language of instruction in the school. Contrary to this, the organization of English clubs such as book, carnival, debating, writing and related associations shall be encouraged. In school publications, the use of English shall be given priority as far as practicable," the bill reads.

Rep. Magtanggol Gunigundo, who is pushing a multi-lingual approach, maintained that it was of no importance to increase the functional literacy of students and said even those who speak English or Filipino as the language of instruction. Julie M. Aurelio

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Theme: " Save A Heart, Save a Life "
Activities: Aerobics, " Kapamilya sa Puso", Lay Forum and
" Prince and Princess of Hearts "
Launching of CHH Heart of Gold Foundation
Blood Donation

March
Department of Pediatrics
" Serving as FPE-Emez in Pediatrics "
Pediatric In-patient Program on Education Launching
Pediatricians' In-depth Pediatric Education
Postgraduate Course " 1 st: 100 One-MLE vs 100 Contravenes"
Pediatric Information and Parents' Education
Well-Baby Contest and Lay Forum
" Healthy Hearts for Pediatric Patients"
Poster Exhibit: " Children with Special Needs "

Liver Wellness Day

April
Infection Control Committee Lecture Series on Infection Control
Practices in the Workplace
HIV Committee " HIV: Is it here?"

May
Clinical Nutrition Committee
Nutrition Screening
Nutritional Assessment Workshop

Department of Human Resources
Labor Day Activities

June
Kidney Month:
Nephrology for the General Practitioner
Lay Forum on Renal Disease Screening
Urinalysis as a Screening Tool for Kidney Disease

July
Rehabilitation Medicine Month
Theme: " Empowering the Physically-Challenged "
Rehabilitation Medicine Postgraduate
Course

August
Department of Orthopedics
" Osteoporosis for the
General Public "
Orthopedic Workshop
for Trauma

Eye Month
Cataract
Screening

September
Department of OB-GYN
Theme: " Women's Health, Family's Wealth "
Postgraduate Course
Lay Forum on Menopause and Prenatal Concerns
Launching of OB-GYN Yearbook

Department of Internal Medicine
Lecture Series: " Increasing Public Awareness of Common
Diseases ", Topics: Tuberculosis, Diabetes Mellitus,
Coronary Artery Disease, Anemia, and Osteoporosis

October
Department of Surgery:
Breast Cancer Awareness Month
Charity Screening for Surgical Cases

Department of Anesthesia
Postgraduate Course I Lay Fora on FAQs
in Anesthesia, Epidural Analgesia and
"Is Pain Synonymous with Surgery?"

November
Bioethics Postgraduate Course:
"Ethics of the Unborn and the Dying:
Public Concerns "

Department of Family Medicine
and Psychiatry:
"Postgraduate Course on Mental Health "

December
Culmination of Centennial
Celebration
CHH Housestaff
Grand Reunion

Palace, bishops welcome Puno's call

To page A2

and inconsistency on a whole.

"But the only reason we call that the religious sector came into the picture, but were already there," Lagdameo said.

"We have been advocating morality in many of our pastoral statements, even before the Chief Justice called for a 'moral force,'" he also said.

Last October, Lagdameo took the initiative to issue a strongly worded statement condemning rampant corruption in the lower echelons of the government.

Radical reforms

Lagdameo, along with Archbishop Oscar Cruz, Bishops Bishop Antonio Villegas, Mandaue Bishop Jose Report and Legazpi Bishop Lagazpi Bishop Antonio Tobias, called for "radical reforms" and declared "the time is from a new government is now."

The five Church leaders, however, fell short of calling outright for a mass action and said it is up to the public to decide what to do with rampant corruption.

When the CBCP holds the first of its semimonthly plenary meeting on Jan. 26 in Manila, Church leaders are expected to comment on the state of the country's political situation.

Tagbilaran Bishop Leonardo Medroso said the presidential election in May 2010 would be at the top of the CBCP agenda.

Politically motivated

Lagdameo said he believed in Puno's integrity and supported that the impeachment threat was politically motivated.

"We all like the honorable person and one can draw conclusions immediately," he said.

Jesus is Lord leader Eddie Villanueva earlier said the impeachment threat was tied to the Arroyo administration's campaign to amend the Constitution before the 2010 elections, which critics said would give lawmakers the chance to lift term limits.

Claudio scoffed at the constitutional speculations that Malacañang is using the impeachment move as the impetus for paving the way for a friendly Supreme Court that would eventually be asked to rule on Charter change.

No impeach move

"Over and for all, we categorically state that there is no impeachment move we are aware of and, if there is one, we will not allow its ultimate outcome from it, we will even help put it out," he said.

Speaker Prospero Nograles said Puno could not call out the country's "natural forces" because there was no move to impeach him.

Nograles said he had talked to both President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and they never gave any indication "of any impeachment" of the Chief Justice.

"In all fairness, I have had a series of personal conversations with the Puno Couple during the holidays and there was no indication whatsoever of any impeachment of the Chief Justice, which is the fifth highest position of the land," he said.

Kapatirang Party

"As House Speaker, I would presume that I would be the first to know if there was any such move against anyone because this impeachment can only emanate from the House," he said.

Nandy Padiwa, founder of the Kapatirang Party, also came out in support of Puno's fight against the forces of evil determined to "wreck the independence of the Supreme Court and its members."

In a statement, Padiwa said he shared Puno's assessment about the decline of moral values, the loss of the country's sense of shame and how ethical standards have been abandoned.

"We in Ang Kapatirang Party, which is founded on moral principles and whose ideology is common good, will back restoration to honor and maintain the independence and integrity of the court," Padiwa said.

Ping urges Puno to run for President

To page A2

that moral factors are looking for as a leader of the nation."

Asked if he would be willing to sacrifice his presidential ambition, Lacson said he was "willing to defer to Puno who had shown his independence from Malacañang on several occasions."

Lacson said he was also ready to try and persuade "on what principles" he would ask his colleagues to shift their bedrock support to the Chief Justice."

Where the right ones rule

"Only in Iran I'm willing to defer, if and when he decides to go for it and more and under any circumstances ... because I owe my country and I'm willing to step aside in favor of what I honestly believe will be good for our people," the senator said.

The former Philippine National Police chief hoped that Filipinos would wake up from their slumber and support a good presidential aspirant, which could run on a platform of rule of law and justice.

"I firmly believe that only when the righteous are in authority that people rise to unite," Lacson said.

"But if we allow the undesirables, we will always have our people groan in suffering and disgust."

Speaking before lawmakers on Wednesday amid renewed moves to impeach him, Puno urged religious leaders to use their "moral force" to subvert the destroy of a country suffering from "moral incoherence."

Such decadence is the root cause of this corruption problem in the country, he said.

"A government without substantial moral authority cannot lead for the graveyard," Puno warned.

Puno explains

Talk of impeaching the Chief Justice initiated from the Supreme Court's decision not to promulgate a July 2006 draft ruling upholding the disqualification of Negros Oriental Rep. Jocelyn Limkaichong over questions about her supposed Chinese citizenship.

Limkaichong's poll protest was disputed by her defeated rival, Olivia Paras, wife of former Rep. Jacinto Paras of President Macapagal-Arroyo's Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi) party.

Jacinto Paras has denied that he or Kampi had anything to do with any move to oust Puno through impeachment.

Businessman Louis Biraogo, a petitioner in the case, has refused Puno of sitting on the ruling and blamed him for its nonpublication. The decision, signed by 14 justices but not by Puno, was penned by then Justice Adolfo Bayas, who retired recently.

Puno said the other day that the Constitution required that a decision should contain a complete statement of facts and the reasons for it.

"If I promulgated that Limkaichong's kind of a decision, all of us in the Supreme Court would have been impeached," Puno said.

Go slow on Biraogo

The high tribunal was advised to go slow in punishing Biraogo for questioning the constitutionality of the draft ruling.

"He should not be tried in contempt because he was not questioning the Supreme Court," Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said.

"He should not threaten him immediately or cite him in contempt for raising questions that deserve answers."

Pimentel questioned statements by the high court spokesperson that there was no matter more against Puno.

"For sure, it is their conclusion that is not based at all on the facts. The impression that [the Representative] Puno can mobilize the House to consider seriously an impeachment against the Chief Justice is not a fact but pure speculation," he said.

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With a report from Aurreum Bandalaria

Puno nemesis insists it's all about the Limkaichong case

To page A2

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Politicians not involved

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He said affiliates come across the country got together with the classes and Silver Shields, claimed that the Supreme Court erred in its decision in November 2008 declaring annulled the election of 10 municipalities can cities.

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"But when we were assured his campaign was to Metro Manila, we met people who said: Let us support Mr. Louis Biraogo," Lozada said.

Society too immoral

"They feel that society has become so immoral and that we have lost values. We already had so many scandals: the ZTE and Hacienda," Lozada added.

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"It's simple. The Chief Justice should not give an answer that would satisfy us and not come out with statements like this is a joke by Mr. Biraogo, I know very well that there is not. I myself am not a Chi-cha.

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the intersection of the rail end of the old forest and the southeast monsoon would persist in the next three days and might stay per Rods Roads and landslides in Luzon, Visayas and the southern and eastern parts of Mindanao.

The southeast monsoon is expected to affect the southeastern Luzon, the Visayas and eastern Mindanao, resulting in roughers very rough waters, Pagasa said.

PTSM is damage

Counting the cost of the cold front affecting wide swathes of the country, the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) yesterday reported that damage to agriculture and infrastructure had already reached P99 million.

Floods occasioned by the tail-end of the cold front prevailing since Jan. 3 have destroyed P47.55 million worth of crops, livestock and agricultural infrastructure in the provinces of Mindoro Oriental, Davao Oriental and the Caraga region.

More than P50 million worth of roads, bridges and school buildings were damaged by the flash floods and landslides, according to Glenn Rabonza, NDCC executive officer and administrator of the office of the Civil Defense in Camp Aguinaldo.

Data provided by Rabonza, Mounts Oriental have the least of the weather condition, registering P39.83 million and P13.3 million in agricultural and infrastructure damage, respectively.

The NDCC recorded a total of 16 fatalities in Caraga alone, Capiz, Northern Samar, Misamis Oriental and Agusan del Sur as of noon yesterday.

About 31,000 people have been sent to 52 evacuation centers by local government units and the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Rabonza said P4.65 million worth of relief goods—including medicines, canned goods and sacks of rice—had so far been sent to the affected families. With reports from *Alexis Romo* and *Jocelyn R. Uy*

Atienza wants Palafox rehired by Korean firm

By Alcuin Papa

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES Secretary Lito Atienza suggested yesterday that the developer of the controversial P150-million sea-horse hotel-casino project at the Subic free port take Ildi-trained Filipino architect Felino "Jun" Palafox for the project.

In a talk with reporters yesterday, Atienza said he would insist that the Grand Utopia Incorporated-owned 300 seventies-old trees already standing on the project site inform the design of the hotel-casino.

"We are asking the developers to carry out the project in the very Architect Palafox designed it, and maybe get him back into the project," Atienza said.

Palafox and his company were hired last year to design the hotel casino. But he later gave up the project and his $1 million fee after the Korean company insisted that the trees be cut down.

For his part, Palafox said he was "open on the idea" of returning to the project but added that he would not insist to be taken back. "The bottom line is that these trees must be saved," he said.

'Black propa'

Atienza also denied coming out with a statement yesterday which appeared to be moves telling Palafox to "stick to the truth" regarding the terms, after noting that on trees had been cut.

"That statement did not come from me. It seems someone is confusing the situation," Atienza said. The press release was emailed to the business purportedly by the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

Palafox, who never claimed that any of the trees had been cut, told the business that Atienza's supposed statement was part of a "black propaganda campaign" to discredit him.

"I already talked to Secretary Atienza and he denied the statements attributed to him," he said.

Atienza also said he apologized to Palafox and asked the architect to "guide" him on the Subic issue.

Palafox who said Fr. Jose Ma Dedaza, who was quoted as saying Palafox's allegations will have to be "assessed," also denied making such statement. Dedaza is executive vice secretary of the Association of Major Religious Superiors.

Atienza also said he has directed the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) to take soil samples and investigate allegations that the trees were being poisoned to give way to their cutting.

"We observed that some of the trees are drying up. But that could be the result of the wild weather. We will conduct an analysis of the soil to get to the bottom of this," he said.

Veterans officials face probe over missing P43M

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE OMBUDSMAN has found sufficient evidence to proceed with a formal investigation of current and former officials of the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO) for allegedly defrauding the government of more than P43 million.

Assistant Ombudsman Mark Jacobson recently recommended the filing of indictments against Veterans Affairs Administrator Wilfredo Palabay and Assistant Administrator Amapy and consultant Enrique Simon.

"They will be investigated for violating Republic Act 3019, the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act," Jacobson said.

He said the PIO also recommended the filing of indictments against Senior Executive Assistant Rolando Bautista, Jr. and Accountant Leonardo Ramos, comptroller Herberto Rosete and then chief Yvonne Aglugub, and former administrators Wilfredo Palabay and Arsenio

3 Red Cross workers kidnapped in Sulu

From page A1

the provincial capitol building and the provincial jail.

Three other Filipino ICRC workers were left behind—medical officer Dr. Mylen Jurilla, senior field officer Norman Concepcion and field officer Mohamad Ibrahim Akki.

Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the Philippine National Red Cross, warned that the kidnapping could ensure an international uproar.

"These are innocent civilians performing humanitarian missions and are protected by international humanitarian law. It's an international crime to attack any personnel or transportation or any Red Cross equipment, including which bears the Red Cross symbol," he said.

"These are the personnel who helped treat families during conflicts," Gordon said. "Give them back to us."

Province 'in chaos'

The six-member ICRC team arrived in Jolo on Wednesday, a day after it delivered in which 12 inmates escaped and another was killed.

"Right now we are forming a crisis management committee for this incident," said John Robert Supersat of the ICRC Davao subdelegation staff.

He apparently joked Sulu Gov. Abdusakur Tan told the Inquirer that the abduction put the province "in chaos."

"I will not forgive this incident and I am praying the families of the suspected kidnappers to better cooperate with the authorities otherwise, we will treat them like kidnappers," Tan said in a phone interview.

Vehicle recovered

The governor said the ICRC vehicle was found two hours after the 11 a.m. abduction, in the village of Bangalao, 7 kilometers away from the capitol.

"It contains two bags probably belonging to two of three ICRC personnel," he said.

All military and police forces have been mobilized to go after the suspects and their victims, Tan said. "We are on the right track and we are hoping soon

CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY "It's an international crime to attack any personnel or transportation or any Red Cross equipment," says Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the Philippine National Red Cross. (TYPHOON)

that we'll get them," Tan said.

Kasim told the Inquirer by phone that the victims had just interviewed officials of the Sulu provincial jail.

Tan said that the ICRC was planning to help in the rehabilitation of the provincial jail following Thursday's jailbreak. The team was looking at water and sanitation facilities.

Brig. Gen. Eugenio Cesaro, commander of the 3rd Marine Brigade based in Jolo, said the victims were on their way out of the capitol compound when the armed men ordered them to board the ICRC vehicle.

Abu Sayyaf blamed

"Some witnesses informed us that three of the Filipino passengers (Jurilla, Concepcion and Akki) were forced to leave the vehicle," Cesaro said.

"We were wondering why they were taken just outside the jail facility," he said.

The jail is just about five meters away from the provincial capitol and a few steps away from the Asia Gourmet eating Center.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS JOLO ISLAND? Roland Bigler, International Committee of the Red Cross communication delegate, points on the Philippine map where his colleagues were abducted on Thursday. (AFP)

An Abu Sayyaf group under Albader Parad is believed to be behind the kidnapping, Cesaro said.

Supersat said the ICRC staff visited the provincial jail to look into the condition of the prisoners there.

"That's why an engineer, Jean Lucien, was there to assess the facility and find out how we could help the prisoners there," Supersat said.

Gov't issues warning

Press Secretary Jesse Robredo said "free pursuit operations" were under way and warned Kidnap and Ransom members to coordinate their movements with security officials in the area.

"Certain measures are also being pursued in the light of the fact that ICRC is an international agency that adheres to neutrality," Robredo said.

Lt. Isidoro Lucbo, a military spokesperson, said the ICRC group was offered armed security escorts by the local Army.

"They were duly advised about the security situation on the island but, being a neutral organization, had denied armed escorts," Lucbo said.

Work continues

ICRC's Roland Bigler said in Manila the agency would not suspend its humanitarian work in other parts of the south, where hundreds of thousands have been displaced by fighting between government troops and Muslim militants.

"There will be no work stoppage. Our humanitarian work on the ground will continue," Bigler said.

The ICRC has been in the Philippines since 1982, assisting and protecting civilians affected by the conflict in Mindanao. As of 2009, the ICRC in Manila has a 132-man staff, including 20 expatriates.

It was the most high-profile kidnapping of foreigners since 2001, when Abu Sayyaf gunmen snatched nearly two dozen tourists from the Dos Palmas resort in Palawan, including three Americans. One was beheaded and the other was killed during a military rescue operation.

The terrorist group put Washington to deploy troops in Mindanao starting in 2002, but they are barred from combat.

A year earlier, Abu Sayyaf seized about 20 foreign tourists from Malaysia's Sipadan resort and held them on Jolo for several months before they were released in exchange for millions of dollars, reportedly paid by Libya. With reports from Michael Lim Ubac, Cynthia D. Balana, AFP and Reuters

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Integrated Bar of the Philippines

SPARE OUR MAGISTRATES

In verbis, non verba and ratio et ratio quaerenda est. In words, not the words, but the thing and the meaning are to be inquired into.

The Integrated Bar of the Philippines searches for the motives and meanings of widespread insinuations to impeach Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno, supposedly for the Supreme Court's non-promulgation of a decision in a congressional election case in 2008. The reason is legally flimsy, but the underlying political motive for targeting the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court is sinister.

Finding faults and flaws in the Chief Justice's character is like searching for a needle in the proverbial haystack. Moreover, Puno's Supreme Court has shown a consistent vigilance, refreshing activism and tough independence not often seen in the highest court. The supposed non-promulgation may just be the slimmest of openings needed by those who see the tribunal as a hindrance to future political plans – extending term limits, general tinkering with the Constitution, to name a few.

Impeachment is the supreme expression of loss of trust and confidence in a high public official. The remedy of impeachment is so extraordinary that the Constitution exclusively limits it to complaints against the President, the Vice-President, the members of the Supreme Court, the members of the Constitutional Commissions (Commission on Audit, Commission on Elections, Civil Service Commission) and the Ombudsman.

Impeachment is not a trifling matter but in the Philippine setting, it has repeatedly been wielded as an intimidating political tool. Impeachment achieves its constitutional objective when it is based on proven facts of guilt and culpability. Indeed, we have witnessed the sweeping effects of impeachment before. The threat of impeachment serves notice to erring public officials that the political institutions and the people are ready to face a highly-charged and extremely divisive process to uphold good governance and accountability in public service.

However, when impeachment is proposed to be used against a person of known integrity and probity, when impeachment is being floated as a means of intimidation and harassment, when impeachment is being threatened to serve mere partisan ends, it amounts to an absolute travesty of the legal process.

The IBP hopes that the raging rumors relating to Chief Justice Puno's impeachment would just remain that — rumors. The man avoids politics and political talk like the plague, and this has served the highest court well. To those who may be intent on unjustly and maliciously targeting the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court, try to examine whatever is left of your conscience.

We stand by Chief Justice Reynato Puno. As a magistrate and lawyer, he has consistently upheld justice and has always stubbornly clung to the honor, dignity and supremacy of the rule of law. As a Filipino, he is an honest and honorable man who should be spared unneeded political intrigue and controversy.

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Governor for Northern Luzon

ERNESTO A. GONZALES, JR.
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Governor for Western Visayas

RAMON EDISON C. BATACAN
Governor for Eastern Mindanao

CARLOS L. VALDEZ, JR.
Governor for Western Mindanao

Palace backs DOJ stand vs PDEA

From page A1

police agents.

Reacting to Gonzalez's statement, the Armed Forces of the Philippines said Marcelino's assignment to the PDEA was resolved by a circular and was in line with Republic Act No. 9163, or the Comprehensive Integrated Drugs Act of 2002.

Lt. Col. Ernesto Torres Jr., AFP spokesperson, said RA 9163 empowered the PDEA to enlist the support of government agencies and other offices, including the AFP to support the agency's drive against illegal drugs.

WORD WAR RAGES Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez points an accusing finger at the use of PDEA, a Philippine agency, of officers in active service. He also commented on the Ombudsman's statements about "case-fixing" prosecutors: it's not happening, Gonzalez adds at a forum in Quezon City, "probably, it was during Marcelino Quintero's time." ALEXY LARA

"The purpose of inviting professional or uniformed [men from other military stations]."

But not more than 0.5 percent of the total number of active officers and not more than 0.2 percent of the enlisted personnel corps could be deployed outside the military organization.

Dangerous

The political opposition branded as "dangerous" the statement made by Gonzalez questioning the inclusion of military men in the fight against the drug syndicates.

"If Secretary Gonzalez is right, then it could be a basis for overturning all cases and convictions stemming from anti-drug operations," opposition spokesperson Sabel Tamano said.

If he were a defense lawyer in drug cases, he could use Gonzalez's statement in asking that the case be dismissed "because the case is unconstitutional. So the statement of the Secretary of Justice is very dangerous," Tamano said.

Partylist Rep. Rodel Cobos said Gonzalez had "subcategorized" the operations of the PDEA.

"It apparently splits an agency by turn considers a nonentity, he forgot his role in the fight against illegal drugs. With him as the justice department's helm, PDEA operatives have been unnerved," the lawmaker said.

Alex Depanicosa of Justice (DOJ) prosecutors the missed the charges against drug suspects Richard Brodett Jr., Jorge Joseph and Joseph Tenson, the PDEA claimed that it received information that the prosecutors had been bribed.

Word war

The agency's allegation triggered a word war between PDEA and Justice officials.

A day after President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered a standoff between the PDEA and the DOJ, Gonzalez came out swinging again, saying Marcelino had no business participating in the agency's operations.

Gonzalez argued that as a soldier in active service, Marcelino was barred from holding another position in a civilian government agency.

Covered by orders

Torres yesterday said the deployment of Marcelino to the PDEA was covered by appropriate orders, including one signed by then Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, now the PNP chief.

The specific AFP regulations on the assignment of active officers to various government agencies have been incorporated into Circular No. 2 issued on March 21, 2003, according to Torres.

The circular prescribed that active officers could be detailed either to an active command or to military missions. Marcelino's designation is the PDEA.

The circular described a military assignment as a commander-initiated action, and detailed to a civilian agency for tasking not personnel are covered by the circular," he told reporters in Camp Aguinaldo.

"So it means that the deployment of Major Marcelino and other officers is covered by a specific regulation of the military," he said.

The circular, of which only the first page was provided to reporters, was signed by Santiago and then adjutant general, retired Gen. Conor Carmona, as endorsed by the defense secretary.

Torres pointed out that the 2003 circular was issued following the enactment of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

Torres also cited other laws supporting the deployment of active military officers in government offices, which included Presidential Proclamation 1017 and Executive Order No. 41 issued in 1986 and President Joseph Estrada's memo issued in 1999.

The memo, dated Jan. 27, 1999, prohibited the assigning of military personnel outside the AFP without prior approval of the President.

Torres said the appointment of Bimoliben to the PDEA post was approved by the President.

He added that it was also the President or the defense secretary who approved the assignment of active officers to various government offices.

Asked if Gonzalez's statement on Marcelino compromised any legal action against the Alabang Boys, Golez said: "The justice secretary just aired his concern on that matter."

"But in the meantime, government lawyers will be seriously studying the opinion verbally issued by the justice secretary," he said.

Asked if Malacañang would endorse Gonzalez for apparently violating the verbal truce, Golez said: "We learned what he's doing."

Drug czar for 2 weeks

Better coordination between the DOJ and the PDEA was among the marching orders of Ms Arroyo when she declared herself the country's "drug czar" Tuesday amid the bribery controversy now involved.

Golez said Ms Arroyo would be the "drug czar" for two weeks during which would make sure that the "house is in order."

"That is the most important thing," he said. "For the law enforcers and prosecutors to make sure that they are in sync." With reports from Michelle Papa and Philip C. Tubeza

Gordon takes up cudgels for 13 jailed RP sailors

SEN. RICHARD GORDON HAS instructed the government he is leading to secure 13 Filipino crew members of a Greek-owned oil tanker who were arrested by the Nigerian government on suspicion of stealing thousands of tons of crude oil and have been languishing in jail since November.

Gordon said he would like the Department of Foreign Affairs to try what really happened in the case of the 13 seamen and whether they have been provided with legal representation in the Nigerian court.

"The government should be doing the necessary actions to help them," he said, as he called on the DFA, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration to look into the cases of the jailed Filipino seamen.

He called on the DFA to assert the license of Seagem, the local manning agency of the Greek ship owner Management Synergy, "which is supposed to have dealings with rebel groups in the Niger Delta."

He identified the 13 seafarers as Erwin Antun, Ronie Sabiniano, Celso Esparcia, Pedro Cermeceño, Mauricio Garcia, George Bulaon, Ricardo Cardoza, Arjhay Abuyan, Reden Rino, Richard Prestano, Celso Rino, Reagan and Sebastian Bedrado.

The Filipino crewmen were arrested in their vessel, the Abuada, by the Nigerian Navy for allegedly conducting illegal oil transport operations in the waters of the ship's flag country. Nine of the ship's 22 Filipino crewmen were able to escape. Michael Lim Ubac

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World Bank bans 3 RP firms tied to graft

From page A1

Both barred for four years), and E.C. de Leon Construction Corp. (barred perpetually).

The others are: China Road and Bridge Corp. (barred for eight years), China State Construction Corp. and China Wu Yi Co. Ltd. (both barred for six years) and China Geo-Engineering Corp. (barred for five years).

$13-M release stopped

The seven firms were found to have engaged in corrupt and collusive practices as they tried to serve as contractors for NRMP 1, a project involving various road developments all over the country that the World Bank had earlier agreed to fund.

The firms were said to have colluded with government officials responsible for implementing the bidding process for NRMP 1.

The World Bank said no funds from the project were disbursed to the sanctioned firms. It said it had stopped about $32 million from being remitted.

"This is one of our most important and far-reaching cases, and it highlights the effectiveness of the World Bank's investigative and sanctions process," said Leonard McCarthy, World Bank vice president for integrity.

The probe "closely analyzed the procurement process the firms participated in and conducted numerous interviews before closing the investigations and initiating sanctions proceedings against the entities," the World Bank said.

Big The sanctioned firms general Rhoda Alcaraz, vice president for human resources of E.C. de Leon, as saying that all the firm's projects were above board.

"There is no evidence to support the allegations. We're still waiting for the official decision," Bhatiga said.

NRMP 2 still go

He said the firm had completed road projects "ahead of time" and was paid by the Philippine government and foreign partners, who "did not name."

But despite the World Bank's decision to reject funding the $13-million worth of contracts for NRMP 1, it will continue to fund the second phase of the project.

It had earlier said that its board approved the funding of NRMP 2 on $232 million.

The second phase of the project will involve the improvement of 450 kilometers of national arterial roads and bridges and the establishment of a comprehensive road maintenance program.

The $150 million will also be used to fund reform programs designed to improve the efficiency of the DPWH and its ability to manage road projects.

"If the World Bank did not believe in the [procurement] system here in the Philippines, then it would not have given the go-signal for the second part," Arroyo said at a briefing following a meeting Wednesday with World Bank country representative Ian Hoffman and Finance Secretary Margarito Teves.

Arroyo, who heads the Government Procurement Policy Board, said the Office of the Ombudsman had begun investigating the government officials who might have colluded with the blacklisted firms.

He said the Ombudsman had been given until the first week of February to complete its probe.

Review of projects

President Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered a review of all World Bank-funded projects in the country, according to Anthony Golez, her deputy spokesperson.

Golez told reporters at a briefing that the review would be discussed in the next Cabinet level so "make sure that we can get a nod" to the corrupt practices.

"We will file appropriate charges against people who will be found guilty of these allegations," he said, adding that one of the administration's programs was to "weed out corruption."

Lorelei Fajardo, Ms Arroyo's other deputy spokesperson, said Malacañang had also ordered the Department of Trade and Industry to look into the activities of the three blacklisted Philippine firms and come up with appropriate recommendations.

For Public Works Undersecretary Manuel Bonoan said the DPWH would allow the blacklisted firms to finish their construction involving projects not assisted by the World Bank and to take part in other infrastructure projects in the Philippines.

Bonoan also said action against the three Philippine construction firms was being delivered pending the department's study of the World Bank's corruption report.

"We will have to see what we will do, department-wise. We need to look into the merits of the World Bank investigation and check on the details because the debarment process was an initiative of the World Bank," he said.

'Learning experience'

Analysts said the World Bank had forwarded information on the blacklisted firms to the Ombudsman.

"It was a learning experience," he said of the World Bank's findings.

Said Budget Undersecretary Lizada Fuentes: "It's good that those involved in unsound practices were penalized. The Ombudsman's investigation will shed light on what really happened [in the bidding for NRMP 1] and what should be done to improve the procurement processes."

Bonoan said the Ombudsman that he opened c ollusion in the bidding for NRMP 1 should also prod the Procurement Transparency Board...headed by Andaya and with private sector representatives and other government officials as members—to study the entire process of procurement and recommend reforms.

Andaya said that as a result of the blacklisting, the government and the World Bank agreed on key improvements—such as the inclusion of an internal auditor, procurement advisor, and a civil society representative to the procurement process—pending the result of the separate inquiries of the DPWH and Ombudsman.

He said the government would also produce a "harmonized" set of procurement rules with the World Bank and other donors. With reports from Christine F. Jaguros, Kristine L. Alave, AFP, AP

Flood of applicants crashes 'the world's best job' website

From page A1

billed as the "Best Job in the World," thousands of people from across the globe have submitted video applications to the tourism department of Australia's Queensland state for its latest, admittedly visionary—a A$150,000 ($140,000) contract to relax on Hamilton Island in the Great Barrier Reef for six months while writing a blog to promote the island.

It was point on Wednesday the huge global interest crashed the incentive website where it is advertised, officials said.

"Oh boy," an overwhelmed Anthony Hayes, chief executive officer of Tourism Queensland, said with a laugh on Thursday. "What have we done?"

Responses to the job offering has been mind-boggling, Hayes said, with many than a million unique visitors logging onto the website advertising the gig since it was posted on Monday.

Free airfare

The department had to upgrade from its one original server to 30 to handle the volume of visitors to the site.

"In one hour alone, 25,000 people were trying to visit," said Nicole Mclaughlan, spokesperson for the state government.

On Thursday a team of 10 people...who, Hayes noted, were sweating to look "pretty nervous"—were sifting through the 2,000 video applications the department had already received, with time of thousands more expected before the Feb. 22 deadline.

Fantastic communicator

In exchange for the plush salary, free accommodation in an oceanfront villa and airfare from the successful applicant's home country, the winner will be required to perform such arduous tasks as strolling the island's white sand beaches, snorkeling in crystalline waters and exploring other islands along the reef.

As the island's "caretaker," he or she will be required to report to a global audience via weekly blogs, photo diaries and video updates on their experience there.

The winner will also have to talk to media three time to time about what they're doing so they can't be too shy and they'll have to love the sea, the sun, the outdoors," acting state Premier Paul Lucas said.

The successful candidate must be over 18, a "fantastic and charismatic" communicator, and able to speak and write English.

The job is part of a $A1.7-million (US$1.1 million) campaign to publicize the charms of the northeastern Queensland town.

"The tourism industry is having a tough time at the moment," Hayes said. "So what we're really trying to do is drum up as much interest and as much passion for the place as we can."

The jobs website shows many of the 34-second video applications received so far from all over the world, including Brazil, Romania, Switzerland, the United States and Turkey.

"We've had visitors [to the website] from as far and wide as Mongolia and Wichita City," MrMcglaughlan said.

Candidates are required to create a video application in English of up to one minute explaining why they are uniquely qualified for the job.

Job seekers can apply on www.islandreallife.com. Reports from AP and AFP

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6

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7

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OPINION

Diosdado's justice

EDITORIAL

A FOURTH MEMBER OF THE SO-CALLED Guillotine Club of trial judges has ascended to the Supreme Court. We trust Associate Justice Diosdado de Peralta, formerly the presiding justice of the Sandiganbayan, won't be tempted to include the Constitution among the victims of that terrible descending blade.

We realize it must be exasperating for Peralta, or for any other appointee to the high court, to be warned about the stages of loyalty to the appointing power. Of course, Peralta knows that his principal loyalty is to the Constitution, not the President.

And yet the warning must be made, just the same, and a close watch on his conduct must be kept. If experience tells us that many justices have in fact voted against the interests of their appointing power in crucial cases, history teaches us that other justices have served unwisely, ignominiously, as rubber stamps of executive legitimacy.

Peralta's appointment to the Court, the first of seven President Macapagal-Arroyo will make this year, comes at a critical time. A great majority of Filipinos look forward to voting in the 2010 elections, but many feel great anxiety about whether the elections will take place as scheduled. Allies of the President are maneuvering to test the limits of executive action, and even to extend the President's term in office—perhaps under the convenient excuse of aligning schedules, perhaps through a more complicated transition to a parliamentary system of government.

In our litigious culture, it is highly likely that Peralta, together with the other members of the high court, will sit in judgment on any serious attempt to change the Constitution before the end of the Arroyo administration. We trust, we hope, that he will vote to keep our system a government of laws, not of men.

Since in the opposition do we like Peralta, because of his role in the conviction for plunder of former President Joseph Estrada. Many might read his appointment as a reward for that very decision, in the exact same way the appointments of Associate Justice Teresita Leonardo-de Castro, who wrote the decision, was perceived. This, to our view, is not a problem. We hold with many the belief that Estrada's conviction was a sound and well reasoned judgment, a true landmark in Philippine jurisprudence that will stand the test of time.

Some court observers do not like Peralta because of his reputation and record as a "hanging judge." As a regional trial court judge, he sentenced 44 convicts in 20 cases to death—a readiness to impose the ultimate penalty that is at odds with both the President's own long-held opposition to capital punishment and current public opinion on the controversial issue. This, in our view, is not too much of a problem, given that the abolition of the death penalty remains in effect.

Others do not like Peralta because he has a special kind of relationship with the President: his father was a friend of the President's late father, President Diosdado Macapagal. Peralta himself was named after the president. This can be a problem, especially if family traditions trump high court precedents (and if Peralta chooses to remain locked inside what Alfred McCoy's wonderfully titled book excoriated as the "anarchy of families" that governs the Philippines).

One lawyer does not like Peralta because, or so Ernesto Francisco alleges, they used to work together in the 1980s, when Peralta had the reputation of being a prosecutor on the make. Even though the justice has vigorously denied Francisco's accusations, this, in our view, is a real problem. It was Peralta who wrote the decisions in two kidnap-for-ransom cases, including the one which awarded 20 percent of San Miguel Corp.''s equity to Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. Francisco, formerly of the ACCRA law firm, said that Peralta should have inhibited himself from the case, since Peralta allegedly acted as a "go-between" for ACCRA in certain Cojuangco interests.

The fate of many unjustified complaints, and the unremarkable cases filed against the Marcoses and even Cojuangco, remain in the hands of the judiciary. We hope Peralta follows the clean-hands rule.

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Two justices differ on Limkaichong's citizenship

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

I READ THE DECISION ON THE DISQUALIFICATION case against Rep. Jocelyn Sy Limkaichong, and there are a few things I still don't understand, not being a lawyer. As I understand it, the whole Tolentino boils down to the **citizenship** of Limkaichong. She is not a natural born Filipino citizen, being a Chinese citizen, claim the petitioners against her, and therefore was qualified to be a member of the House of Representatives.

On the other hand, Limkaichong claims that she was born more than after her father, Julio Sy, became a Filipino citizen through naturalization proceedings. She also claims that her mother is a natural born Filipino citizen.

But the petitioners claim that her father's naturalization was null and void due to procedural lapses and therefore Julio Sy remained a Chinese citizen. Under Philippine law, the wife takes the citizenship of her husband; therefore Limkaichong's mother, although a Filipino citizen before her marriage to Julio Sy became a Chinese citizen after her marriage. Both her parents being Chinese, Limkaichong is therefore also a Chinese.

However, children of mixed parents, can choose the citizenship of their mother upon reaching the age of 21. But Limkaichong did not elect the Filipino citizenship of her mother upon reaching the age of 21 as she is still a Chinese citizen.

On this, Limkaichong cites a Supreme Court decision similar to her case. Because of the "naturalization" of her father, Limkaichong is a Filipino, or so she thought, before the Commission on Elections declared her a Chinese citizen. Therefore, she could not have elected Philippine citizenship upon reaching the age of majority. Why? Because she elect Filipino citizenship when she was already a Filipino?" was how the Supreme Court decision put it. But many years later she would be declared not a Filipino because of procedural lapses in the naturalization of her father never entered her mind. Therefore she did not elect the citizenship of her mother when she became 21.

But that did not qualify her to become a member of the House of Representatives. Whether or not she knew it at the time she decided to run doesn't matter. She is still disqualified, according to the Comelec.

The reasoning of the decision (on draft, take your pick) of Associate Justice Ruben Reyes of the Comelec decision. However, an opinion titled "Reflections," by Associate Justice Antonio Carpio (who, by the way, also signed the Reyes draft) double the conviction of the Comelec's decision. The Comelec gravely abused its discretion in issuing its May 17, 2007 and June 29, 2007 resolutions, because they lacked the substantial evidence required by law to support a conclusion, Carpio said.

In ruling that the naturalization process of Julio Sy was null and void, the Comelec had said that the solicitor general was deprived of participation in the naturalization proceedings as required by law. That leads the proceedings void.

Carpio said, however, that the Comelec relied entirely on the only statement issued the Office of Solicitor General (OSG) has pertaining to Sy's naturalization proceedings (Docket Entry No. 27191, all other records pertaining to it being no longer existent).

But Docket Entry 27191 "is unreliable," Carpio said, and he questions the information.

"The outstanding circumstances show that the OSG was not deprived of participation in Sy's (naturalization) proceedings," Carpio said, adding that the OSG received notices of the hearings and Sy's oath of allegiance but did not intervene proceedings to cancel Sy's naturalization certificate.

The OSG had held a summary to evaluate proceedings to annul Sy's naturalization certificate but it never did," he said.

Carpio concluded that: (1) the OSG was not deprived of participation in the proceedings; (2) there was no bad faith on the part of Sy; (3) Sy took his oath of allegiance on the 30th day after he was declared a naturalized Filipino; and (4) the solicitor general's, or any of his representatives, did not oppose Sy's naturalization. "The fact that Sy took his oath of allegiance exactly 30 days and not after he was declared a naturalized Filipino—only a few hours short—is doubtful," he added.

The Comelec glossed over the discretion Reyes it joined a resolution arbitrarily, with no basis in fact and in law, Carpio said. The Court had held that it can—and must—review the factual findings of the Comelec when there is a showing of grave abuse of discretion or arbitrariness in its resolutions, he said.

Despite the finality of the June 9, 2007 resolution of the Comelec en banc, the question of citizenship can be resolved not of any time.

To prevent injustice and to avoid delay, one opinion Carpio offered was for the Supreme Court to rule upon the question of Limkaichong's citizenship. Another option is for the petitioners against Limkaichong to question her citizenship before the Comelec (Section 3 Rule 6 RRC7).

But meanwhile, time is running. Time waits for no one, especially in election cases. By the time the whole mess is cleared up, Limkaichong's term may be over so the whole thing becomes moot and academic.

On the other hand, Cirilo Baroa, the runnerup in Limkaichong, won't gain anything the camote occupy to the position is by reason of as she had petitioned. The tribunal has already issued a doctrine that "the candidate who obtains the second highest number of votes cannot be declared elected in case the winning candidate is disqualified."

All those ethics seminars: A waste?

PASSION FOR REASON

René C. Pangalangan

THE HEADLINES READLIKE GAVE THE BAD news that the World Bank has blacklisted three Philippine construction firms for corrupt practices, but no closer reading, the body showed even more awful news. The WB barred only seven such firms worldwide. (Two were Filipino and a fourth, through fortune of circumstance with its hand in the till on a Philippine project. Even worse, the paper earlier reported, that international agencies had known and corruption fund-research for the Office of the Ombudsman. The can only exclaim the irony if still corruption were not rampant. Indeed, the anticorruption agency because of feats that the Dutch might get stolen. What's done it end?

It is welcome news, however, that corruption has become an international issue. Local elites are no longer completely free to prey at will on their countries, and can be made to answer by global agencies beyond their power to bully and coerce. But there is a flipside in the globalization of the anti-corruption campaign: they fail to address the local cultures in the language the locals truly understand.

The Philippines is the best example. How many anticorruption laws have been passed? How many new institutional checks and balances do we create each year, because last year's version failed and has to be bankrupted by a newer one? The corruption in the land since we began from colonies—or on the contrary has it increased in both scale (as in "Yes, only 200 for dice") and height (as in Camelot Chief Benjamin Abalos addressing that line to Socio Secretary Romulo Neri, Bish Neri reporting it to President Macapagal-Arroyo, and Mr. Arroyo, apparent of the crime, doing, nothing). Come to think of it, remember that the key figure in the Court of Appeals bribery scandal was a professor of legal ethics—and all he got from the Supreme Court was a slap on the wrist?

Let me venture or the law desperate anti-corruption measure: ethics seminars for government officials. Deputized, bruise-tactical passed all the laws we could enact: the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, the Forfeiture of Ill-Gotten Wealth Law, the Code of Ethics for Public Officials, the Money Laundering Law, the Plunder Law. We have created a fearful array, an Ombudsman, and now only the small panel under the President. Whenever I read this litany, my eyes glaze over, the "MEGIF" effect that writers dread.

Those seminars fail because we Filipinos treat them the way we do church sermons. We sit and listen passively, and then we rush out to the parking lot and fight tooth-and-nail to be the first out and on to the mall. These seminars assume that Filipinos learn either through a smorgasbord of fixed questions and categorical answers, "no ifs, ands or buts," we grey areas between this line of light and the horror of darkness, as if there is a bright line that separates the path to heaven and the path to hell. This pedagogy has no utility consequences.

One, it limits the remit of the teacher and the duty of the student or seminar participant. I have heard a teacher of legal ethics say that his only task was to teach the legal do's and don'ts, whether or not the students actually live by them cannot be taught in the classroom. The classroom can only shape the mind, it cannot reach to the heart which—by the time the students are lawyers—is fully formed. Character, appraisal

Who gains from Puno's impeachment?

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE SUPREME COURT HAS COME UNDER A storm of controversy after withholding the promulgation of judicial decisions upholding the validity of the Commission on Elections' first disqualified Zoilo Jr. Limkaichong from sitting as a representative of Negros Oriental in the House of Representatives on the grounds that she is a Chinese citizen.

Limkaichong won the congressional elections in 2007, defeating Elnia Baraz, wife of his late brother Jacinto Jara, by more than 7,000 votes.

The Court en banc decided unanimously in a resolution on withheld promulgation of the disqualification decision. The draft, although signed by 14 justices, except Chief Justice Reynato Puno, was withheld ever since it was said to be deliberated upon by the Court. The non-promulgation of the decision, dated July 15, 2008, sparked a flurry of rumors during the past two weeks that moves were afoot in Congress to oust the Chief Justice (based on the non-promulgation of the draft decision, penned by Justice Ruben Reyes who retired last Jan. 2.

Court spokesman Midas Marquez has acknowledged the threat, saying "we have heard of the unsubstantiated rumor that Cabinet liaisons and administration allies in the House to pave the way for the appointment of a chief justice who might be more amendable to current proposals to change the Constitution to make way for extending the hold on power of President Macapagal-Arroyo beyond her term, which ends in 2010. Puno said he was prepared to face any attempt to impeach him. "It is not in our hands," he said. "If they proceed with that move, then let it be. We cannot prevent it. We'll meet it when it happens. I'm in perfect peace." He said he was concerned that the tortured moves to impeach him could have devastating effects on the independence of the judiciary. "I like to think that I'm just an incident in this fight. The bigger stake is the independence of the judiciary. If we lose the independence of the judiciary, democracy would die," Puno said.

He said the Limkaichong electoral case was decided by the entire Supreme Court. "The Court itself has already explained what happened to the case—and this is why questions rather tiresky by the 15 justices," he said. "So, if they think there is fault in that collective stand of the 15 justices why don't they complain about the entire Court? Why are they trying to pin the blame on a single person when the entire Court has explained that this is the unity decision about but the decision of the entire Court?"

In a resolution last month, the court explained why it says draft was not promulgated despite the assurances of all the justices during an en banc session in July last year. It pointed out that nine justices returned early "in the month," while four out of 15 justices concurring only in the result, the ruling written by Reyes "has to be tinkered with," the Court said. Thus, "the justices decided to withhold the promulgation of the promulgation of Justice Reyes."

There were threats that privilege speeches were to be delivered in the House when Congress resumes its session on Monday to denounce Puno by surrounding it related to the non-promulgation of the Court's draft decision on the unseating of Limkaichong. These attacks were planned to jump start the impeachment moves by members of the President's party, Lakas-Kampi.

The timing of this move is suspicious. It would be the second time an impeachment move has been taken against a chief justice since 2003, when an impeachment complaint was filed against Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., spearheaded by the late then of Bishop Cayetano's Bukusolan People's Initiative Coalition. The attacks were led by Cayetano's proxies in the House and his nephew Gilbert Teodoro. They accused Davide of alleged manipulation of funds intended for the living allowances of court employees. Standing in ground against this frontal assault from a corrupted political department of government, the Court unanimously ruled that this impeachment complaint against Davide was unconstitutional.

This time, the attack on the Puno Court is spearheaded by a citizen, Louis Biraogo who claims he has filed a taxpayer's suit in the name of "public interest" to put pressure on the Supreme Court to release its draft decision that would annul Limkaichong. Biraogo also launched a media campaign, accusing Puno of giving favorable treatment to Limkaichong. He went to the media and imputed wrongdoing by Puno for withholding the promulgation of the draft.

These accusations provided ammunition for the President's political allies in the House to begin moving against Puno. Claims by Biraogo that his intervention in the Limkaichong case was motivated by "public interest" are undermined when tested by the criteria, who stands to gain from the impeachment of Puno?

If impeachment proceedings against Puno are initiated in Congress, Bataan ruling as a party could muster enough votes to impeach Puno. If Puno is impeached, the administration will be free to appoint a new chief justice who will be accommodating to Charter change through a constituent assembly. Puno is known to be against Charter change through a constituent assembly created by Congress voting as one chamber. This explains why Puno is detested.

Return of The Finger

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

A FEW MONTHS BACK, I WROTE ABOUT MY INJURY TO my right, fifth finger and was surprised at the number of letters I got from people describing similar problems and ongoing treatments. Mostly though, readers wrote simply to say how amazed they were with the cultural dimensions of the injury. And once, in a bookstore, a reader whom I had never met before actually approached me and, pointing to my finger, asked how it was. At the time I wrote the column my finger, or should I say, the finger we all

Medical authorities say that people who myself lead hard lives because we are always analyzing illnesses, including our own afflictions. It's interesting work though, because human beings are constantly coming up with new ways to get sick, including labeling and giving meaning to illnesses, and the many ways we cope with, label and interpret illnesses, and some up with all kinds of ways of coping and treating.

My little digital tale exists in May last year when I was ill, eating a fourteen bottle with water. The heavy bottle slipped, and I caught it with my left hand, but got caught in the middle. After a few hours, I realized it was quite a serious injury because besides the pain, the finger wouldn't stretch out.

Riddel Finger

Such injuries are quite common, and medical books refer to it as a Riddel finger. In the United States, the law term for a finger injury is a Basketball finger because the injury is associated with that sport.

In the Philippines, such injuries are associated more often with basketball, but we don't call it a basketball finger. Instead, we say we got "fingered" or "na-*fingar* ako." Friends who missed my first "finger" commented that we were only just so many years from feminist sensitivity, who were probably imagining, as I did, those macho basketball players advising, "Ala, *finger* ako." (Non-Tagalog speakers, be very very careful with the active and passive tenses here: there's a world of a difference between "*nag-finger*" and "*na-finger*" but in any case, both sound funny coming from a basketball player.)

The "finger" label comes from the way the injury is sustained. Imagine a basketball player's outstretched fingers hitting a ball too hard so the interior ends it. The fifth finger, being the smallest, is more vulnerable to injuries, to the tendons in the bones.

After my experiences on the finger some ten, I had some friends who told me they had never heard of the term "na-*finger*." Instead they used "na-tinikle," literally to get tickled, as in forks used for a meal. It's also a graphic description of the way the injury happens.

What do we do with such injuries? One reader wrote that many years back, as a basketball player, he did sustain such an injury and was told by a doctor to "*ipatong sa kabilang daliri*," pulling hard, turn hard, on the finger. Others gave a bite or a traditional massage therapist to get the same thing done. The results are not usually too good.

In Pinoy's medicine, the treatment is a splint. We have to immobilize the finger or it will "tell," staying rooted to prevent a "gumewang" or wobbly finger.

Ever since I wrote the column, I have become more conscious about other people's bodies' injuries, noticing the gross such deformity. The "na-*finger*" and "na-tinikle" terms, it came out, seem to be more male-specific and it associated with basketball, but many women also have sustained finger injuries. Maybe it's the whole thing to do with "*kuko*." One of my students, a professor, injured her finger pulling out a heavy book from the shelf!

Let's get back to my Injured Finger. I had to resist the urges of friends to find the appropriate splint—in one of the shops in front of the National Orthopedic Hospital, and used in for what it was designed for, a splint. Instead, I made the finger tried to be valiant, stretched out straight for a few seconds, then gave up and went limp, like a fishing duck with a wringed neck.

So, off I went to Dr. David Cabatan, who takes care of my occasional sprains and bad knees. (A typical one.) The very solicitous doctor took one look at my finger, my accident history and asked me what had happened, I giddy answered, "Na-tinikle." She nodded almost mindedly and did the X-ray, but after the procedure, she came back to me looking very worried and getting me really apprehensive, wondering if she had discovered a major injury. Almost apologetically, she asked for the X-ray again and looked at it. I was getting to get into the "na-*finger*" question should not to, even worried that she might think I was a dirty old man.

Dr. Cabatan looked at the X-ray and confirmed that there was an injured tendon. He fashioned a new splint and said I had to wear it for another six weeks. My pessimism, he said, and if it didn't work, there was the option of surgery which would straighten the finger but leave it stiff and not quite so functional.

The six weeks flew by and the day of reckoning came. He back. I still have a kinking duck finger, but I have decided I prefer functionality over aesthetics. There's still pain now and then, especially when I overwork, and it sometimes gives rubber ball-like flexings. How, don't tempt me to see the stone balling, not after fingering.)

How many fingers?

Anybody, all this has also made me wonder about the evolution of the human hand. Do we really need the fifth finger? I managed quite well with mine, including much much can do that requires the use of fingers. Come to think of it, I hope reminding students about the importance of our thumbs, or more specifically, an opposable thumb. In Neanderthals, in ability to combine with the index finger, allows us to hold, grasp, pinch, grab—actions which multiply many times over to many of our indispensable day-to-day activities.

Some years back, I read an article in the New Scientist about biologists studying the design of the human foot and concluding we really only need three toes. I thought, maybe three fingers should do, which would have meant radically different mathematics. Other societies developed a decimal system based on the use of 10 fingers.)

As said behold, a new article in The New York Times by Dana Stanton describes how she had injured her fifth finger and how it made her realize that without that finger, she could not "swing a tennis racket with control, or severely grasp a dumbbell." In her case, it was the counting, rather than the injury itself, that created the problem. The doctor had told her that she should not do anything for a few days "give the inside a touch." She had to be open-minded.

Me? I don't play tennis, and as for dumbbells, I have more than my fair share of them in my life. Sometimes I look at my knee joints and feel bad for it, but I know it doesn't feel sad or miserable for itself as I shouldn't lose sleep over it. Life goes on, and the injury did provide me with lessons in language and culture, while providing a bit of entertainment for my readers.

* * *

Comments: michael@magsasay.com.ph

South Asia at war

WORLD VIEW

Rizwan Abbas

GAITHERSBURG—LAST MONTH'S TERRORIST AS-sault in Mumbai inaugurated not only India's eventful second year of term as chair of the UN Security Council but also the beginning of a new phase in South Asia's relations. The attackers did not hide their faces or show themselves up with outside jackets. Anonymity was not their goal. They wanted to be identified as defenders of a cause. Behind their assault, a well-organized, and well-resourced network of the region, this attack may prove to be the beginning of the unmaking of South Asia.

Regional conflict, involving all of the region's states and many members of non-state actors, has produced huge amounts of terrorism fallout, including the sale of refugees. Neither both India and Pakistan, economic disparities and a surge of social injustice have created fertile ground for conflict. The use and abuse of religious forces, whether "jihad" or "Hindu fundamentalism," are nothing at the roots of communal harmony across South Asia.

Much of the current trouble can be traced to Afghanistan, whose tragedy could never have remained confined within its designated borders. The dynamics of the region changed when the Afghan Jihad, which began in 1979, was internationalized into "mujahedeen" through a US-led enterprise in which both the West and the Muslim world happily participated. Pakistan, always insecure about India, became the back of this transformation. The West thought it had moved on after the fall of the Soviet empire, but the region—and in particular the global community—continues to pay a heavy price for this unholy project.

The third two decades in South Asia can be attributed to the Afghan jihad years: the rise of the Taliban, the dominance of Pakistan's sponsored religious fanatics within the Kashmir freedom movement, and the emergence of Islamic militancy within Pakistan. In Afghanistan, Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies sought "strategic depth" against India. Moreover, they

operations on the Pakistani side of Kashmir after the devastating 2005 earthquake there.

What Pakistan's military establishment failed to realize was that groups like LET and JuD had local agendas as well—converting Pakistan into a theocracy. Hafiz Saeed, the founder of LET and currently the head of JuD, once provided support that: "We believe in the Clash of Civilizations, which will continue until Islam becomes the dominant religion."

JuD, along with many other like-minded groups, radicalized thousands of young Pakistanis. Through its web and print publications, it also routinely challenged the teachings of the Sufi preachers who originally brought Islam to South Asia by presenting pluralism and love for human life.

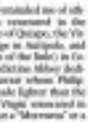
Even while demanding strong action against JuD, India must recognize that Pakistan is itself a victim of terror. Any military confrontation with Pakistan will only embolden militant radicals. Militant groups can easily look themselves as the true defenders of Islam against the Indian threat. Moreover, such a confrontation will only help improve peace prospects in South Asia.

For Pakistan, a concerted and sustained effort against all extremist groups operating in the country is necessary. Militants of all stripes must be decommissioned completely and transparently. Equally important for Pakistan is to expand and reform its judicial system. Militants often escape from basic services so that radical groups cannot fill the void. Otherwise, the status quo can gravely threaten Pakistan's—and South Asia's—future.

Project Syndicate

Hassan Abbas is a fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and Institute for Policy and Understanding.

What color is the Santo Niño de Cebu?



LOOKING BACK

Anabelle R. Geaga

MOST PEOPLE WILL VISIT A MUSEUM OR HISTORICAL site only once in their life. Usually that first and last visit is a school field trip that left them cold and bored.

Because of my work, I visit museums and historical sites once a year even if I had been there many times before. I always find something new or something lived and old. At any rate, I do not intend on previous visits numb out and that for me is a futile exercise.

A few years ago, while on my 4th visit in San Agustin Church in Intramuros declared a World Heritage site by Unesco, one of the friends Dr. Ramon Villegas and I accompanied on a tour showed us the choir loft. San Agustin is famous for its trompe l'oeil (trick of the eye) ceilings that look carved to viewers at floor level but are actually painted. The columns of the nave also look like marble but are faux or false. Even are but painted wood. The church's interior would complement the wonderful ceiling but they were rather crude depictions of angels including in heaven.

What made them less Agustin angels memorable was the color of their skin. Archangels are usually male; angels are androgynous, they can be either male or female. Before being flying beasts with a span of wings are obviously gender-less, or so we would say in Filipino, seeing feminine. Angels and cherubs are usually cute, fat, blond, and blue-eyed like dolls you will find in any toy store. There is nothing new about these flying children's forms or embroidered on clothes surrounded by flying ribbons.

Then the Spanish Star pointed at a black angel I presumed to be a devil and I was taken aback when he proudly declared, "Look, mother!, these dark-skinned angels are Filipinos." Ian figured out that some of the angels in the choir loft seemed to resemble their Filipino are two shades lighter than blacks. Furthermore, as he only glib, or in-jocular, they should have added Asian as

well. Some with yellow skin, black teeth and slit eyes. Interestingly, these angels are no more. Someone must have complained more loudly than me.

Most Asian Spanish angels reminded me of other "black" religious images venerated in the Philippines, like the Nazarene of Quiapo, the Virgin of Peace and Good Voyage in Antipolo, and the Virgen de la Regla (Virgin of the Rule) in Cebu. In Manila there is a beautiful ivy Mulatto Virgin of the Virgin of Montserrat within Philippine version has become a dusky fighter than the black original in Spain. The Virgin venerated in Mendiola Street, Manila, is not a "Morenita" or a "Negra" but a Gil mestiza who spent too much time under the tropical sun.

Which images are preferred by Filipinos, the white ones or the black ones? We now have a third race looking "Virgen ng Banaoy" who is dressed in Philippine attire, but even that is a recent invention. The Philippine Independent Church used to have a venerated image called "Virgen ng Balintawak" that is also a mestiza. Even the Child Jesus wore a white shirt, red pants and carried a bolo just like the iconographic image of Andres Bonifacio.

The Niño with white skin is different from the true version of the Santo Niño we have today. If you visit the Santo Niño Cathedral museum in Cebu and the capture room that have transformed beside it, you will find Santo Niños in real every size and budget. There are Niños you can carry in your pocket, some are table size, life size or even bigger than you do. These images are dressed in the true to real and gold garments like the Santo Niño of Tondo or you can dress the Holy Child to suit your preferences (doctor, nurse, lawyer, policeman, street sweeper, baker, etc.) or the child can be left naked, with a diaper, or clad in baggy pants, pants, rubber shoes and a t-shirt. Some of the Santo Niño images told me was the "Santo Pilipino Yuyk." Some people prefer to bring the image to the mall and get clothes at the children's section. I have seen some families strolling along the mall with their Santo Niño who is an important part of the family outing.

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Comments are welcome at inquirer@inquirer.com.ph

Dump threatens Metro Manila

LAST YEAR, RESIDENTS OF SAN Mateo, Rizal says alarmed when they realized that a new dump was being built right in their midst. Spearheaded by San Mateo Mayor Jun Chua with the support of Rizal's provincial government, the "sanitary landfill" is located in two barangays, Maly and Guinayang.

The landfill will cover a 19-hectare area which would later be expanded to 200 hectares. Despite arbitrary prior consultation with the affected communities, the project is of doubtful legality and morality.

An announcement from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources—regarding a 95.6-billion allocation from the national government for LGUs planning to shift from open and controlled dumps to sanitary landfills—gave a clue as to why the LGUs of Rizal insist on building "landfills" despite the provision clearly defining as the province that ecological and environmental concerns.

Moreover, the ability of the project's operator, San Mateo Sanitary Landfill and Development Corp. Also, the operator failed to produce an Environmental Compliance Certificate for the project.

The landfill, under the original application, was supposed to be built in Barangay Pintong Bukawe. The Supreme Court threw by the site's choice in 2005 because it was inside the Marikina Watershed Reservation. The new site is only three kilometers away and is still part of the reserve. Once in use, the landfill is (or now can will) will pollute the soil, groundwater and nearby rivers and thus put at risk the health of residents not only of nearby communities but also of Metro Manila who get their water supply from this watershed.

A BULLDOZER used as garbage collector in Divisoria

Also, the 200-hectare expansion area of the new dump is part of a 473-hectare area designated as Protected Forest Area by the Land Use Plan of San Mateo. A study by the UP National Institute of Geological Sciences (UP-NIGS) describes the San Mateo area as "geologically critical with steep slopes (above 50 degrees) that render it prone to landslides, flash floods, erosion, massive soil wasting and other natural hazards. The removal of forest cover in the area to give way to the project will not only endanger lives of people in the communities, it will also destroy their sources of livelihood.

The Kilusang Bayan ng San Mateo for the Environment unites with the people of San Mateo, who now realize the dangers being posed by the project, in demanding for the immediate closure and cessation of all construction activities and operations on the site.

—EDUARDO B. GARCIA
BIONGALBEN,
Kilusang Bayan ng San Mateo
for the Environment,
16 Mayflower St.,
Barangay Central, Mitosan, QC

LETTERS

Economic woes and form of gov't

PLEASE ADD ME IN APPEALING to President Macapagal-Arroyo and her Cabinet, senators, congressmen and members of the judiciary to sincerely attend to the needs of our countrymen and women, especially the unseen, unheard-of and unsung.

I feel so sad hearing about all those government scandals and controversies such as the fertilizer scam, Charter change initiatives, modus hilings, etc. Now I wish the executive, legislative and judiciary would be honest and sincere enough in serving the Filipino people.

My heart aches every time I see on TV and hear over the radio about people in some parts of Southern Mindanao running away from their villages, leaving their homes and starving, leaving hunger-stricken cannot solve the land-hungriness of the Filipinos, but if the legislative department would pass the pending proposal to convert all land to every landless Filipino family. I believe no Filipino would starve and be a squatter in his own country.

Democracy is the best form of government because it is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. I also believe that whatever form of government we have, our country's economic problems won't be solved if its officials are not trustworthy.

A person who stands for truth is the humblest and happiest creature in this world. I hope and pray that all members of the executive, legislative and judiciary bow in obedience that are just taking a vacation here in this world. All of us will die. This hundred years is too long a lifetime. Next year, our Lord Jesus Christ will come to judge each of us by our deeds. There are only two destinations after this life, on where we will live happily forever with our Creator, or hell, the place of eternal damnation.

Madame President, you are the commander in chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. With much humility, my big cue is please stop the all-out war against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the New People's Army. They are all our brother Filipinos. Let love touch your heart so that peace will reign in our country. A sincere dialogue with the leaders of the MILF and the NPA is the best way to solve the economic problems of our country. May God give you all the grace you need for truth, justice and equality.

—MYRNA MAE DE GALICIA-SUMIRA,
Mahogan El Salvador,
Silanan Oriental

Released on month's first business day

THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO THE letter sent by Nicasio G. Valdevieso which was published in the Jan. 12 issue of the Inquirer.

In his letter, Ambassador Valdevieso expressed that as of the morning of Jan. 5, his wife, a retired career foreign service officer, had not yet received her monthly pension.

We, however, wish to clarify that there was no delay in the release of pensions benefits. Pensions are released on the first business day of the month.

Work in government offices, including the GSIS, resumed only last Jan. 5, which means that pensions benefits were to be released earlier that day.

The GSIS remains committed to improving ways to facilitate the release of pension benefits. For the information of GSIS pensioners, pension benefits are now released through the GSIS eCard Plus, a top improvement compared to the old system where pensioners receive their benefits through checks, which are subject to a three-day clearing.

Once pension benefits are credited into the eCard Plus, pensioners can already withdraw their money from any of the ATMs that is linked to MegaLink, Bancnet and Expressnet ATMs all over the country. Pensioners abroad, likewise receive their pension benefits through the eCard Plus, and can withdraw cash from any ATM under the Visa Plus Network.

—JULIA C. TALINGTING,
Vice president,
Public Relations and
Communications Office,
Government Service
Insurance System

Term extension: GMA counsel's view

THIS IS A REACTION TO THE Jan. 14 Inquirer editorial.

I respectfully assure the Inquirer and its readers that I am not privy to any political plans of President Macapagal-Arroyo. Neither am I authorized to speak on her behalf on this issue. As a matter of fact, I have not talked to the President or to any of her advisers regarding my view that her term as well as the term of other elective officials cannot be extended beyond 2010 by a mere constitutional amendment, be it through a constituent assembly or a constitutional convention. My opinion was my quick reaction to the news item that appeared in the Inquirer on Jan. 8. Immediately upon my reaction to one of the Inquirer reporters.

And to prove that there is no rush gotcha between me and the President on this issue, I can assure the Inquirer and its readers that I will abandon the filing of a petition before the Supreme Court against any move or amendment to the Constitution that would extend the term of any elective official, including that of the Senate and Vice President Noli de Castro. I will stand just and maintain my position. Based on the decision of the Supreme Court in David v. Comelec (April 3, 2007), penned by no less than former Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban, that "in a democracy, elected leaders can legally and morally justify their reign only by obtaining the voluntary consent of the electorate."

There is only one such move to amend the Charter by extending their term of office in a subtle and self-serving proposition to lengthen governance without the mandate of the governed. In a word, any move to change, by these elective officials whose term will expire in 2010 are still covered by the present Constitution.

—REINALD B. ROCKANTIN,
Attorney-at-law,
Philsmith Village, Las Piñas City

Thank God for Marcelino, De Quiros

CONRADO DE QUIROS' JAN. 12 column, which was titled "Marcelino for president," sang so true, so true.

I had long been praying to God that He show something to open the eyes of corrupt Filipinos. When I saw and heard Maj. Prot. Marcelino on TV, I thanked God and I praised him since more that He allow Marcelino to touch the hearts of Filipinos.

When I read De Quiros' Jan. 12 column, I thanked God once again for his brilliance and courage. God bless De Quiros always.

—ROSALIA M. AGAMEZ,
Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija

Right language to make Palace listen

HON. MAR ROXAS HAS RIGHT IN using a strong language in his angry speech at the anti-Charter change rally in Makati. Only by using expletives can we make the arrogant, corrupt, morally bankrupt administration of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo realize the misery of the Filipino public. A gentle, humble speech would not have been appropriate given the culture of impunity being foisted by this regime over the Filipino people.

—ISABELA ABAD,
18 Green Leaves II,
Capitol Green Village,
Tandang Sora, Quezon City

Disarmament is imperative to achieve Middle East peace

THE ATROCITIES IMMS NOW stopped. There is no mistaking that the despicable acts can only be done by cruel, death-bent barbarians and violent lebanese. these men can only be described as terrorists. Their primary targets are not their sexual enemies but innocent civilians. There only aim is to kill for the purported warring power.

The government press briefings have outputs that the three Islamic liberation Front has something to do with the series of bombings in Mindanao. While the MILF may not have inherent terrorist tendency, it cannot wash its hands completely because the rouge wants of the suspected terrorists always lead to MILF-controlled territories.

The MILF leadership has denounced the violence, all right, but then again the ugly reality remains that the MILF has very little control, if any, over the forces of its renegade field commanders—Ombra Kato, Bravo and Pangalian. Most, these lawless MILF forces have provided sanctuaries to the terrorists. Jemaah Islamiyah and the Sayyaf terrorist elements, which have been causing terror not only in Mindanao but also in other parts of the country.

It is unfortunate that civilians have become vulnerable not only of the bombings but also of bet peanut operations. Such is the outrageous consequence of these brutal, lunatic atrocities. It reminds us of Hamas raining bombs on non-specific targets in Israel which, in retaliation, has invaded Gaza with brutal force.

Peace negotiation is clearly just life when belligerents continues and the casualties mount. for as long as the fingers are in the trigger of war instruments, hostilities will continue. For as long as the forces are not neutralized effectively, there will always be violence.

This makes the disarmament is the all the more primordial upon the resumption of the peace talks. Given the behavior of terrorist elements, disarmament has become imperative.

—MELCOR BARONG,
mbarong@yahoo.com

Biased and grossly unfair

THIS IS TO EXPRESS OUR GREAT disappointment with John Nery's column titled "Estrada's wedding and other plots" (Inquirer, 1/16/09), specifically as regards the author's reference to the Senate Electoral Tribunal (SET) (sans between Koko Pimentel and Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri).

Nery called Senator Zubiri's counter protest "absurd" and "comical." He also said that it is "meant only to delay the SET's measure of reckoning." Nery even imputed "dagdag bawas" as the latter. These allegations are unjustified, subjective and biased, which force his "friend Enrile" to say, "I can't believe it."

If there was one thing that Nery earnestly pointed out, it was the need for "every citizen [to] follow the twists and turns of the protest closely, because here, unavoidably, is evidence of election fraud."

Nery may find his source of some facts and acts that his good friend Sen. Pimentel committed. His letter intends to enlighten him and "every citizen." There is evidence in the ongoing revision proceedings in the counter protested areas that would show and prove that election fraud has been committed by Sen. Pimentel. Certain anomalies have been uncovered in the proceedings, such as thousands of ballots in Makati, with Koko's name on them, were written by one person, thousands of ballots in Manila and Quezon City with Koko's name, were found to be spurious/fake, the physical counts in the counter protested precincts does not match the votes for Senator Zubiri that were intentionally not read in his favor.

Colonna like the one Nery wrote give the general public the wrong notion that Senator Zubiri is actually guilty of what Pimentel accuses him of and that the latter is the victim of election fraud. There is a proper venue for the determination of whether or not Senator Zubiri indeed committed election fraud. Writing a column that finds a guilty guilty of such serious allegations, especially when he or she is biased for the opposing party, is not just grossly unfair, it is also unethical. It is everyone's responsibility to exercise prudence in making accusations, especially when a person's reputation would be placed in danger of being destroyed.

—MARVIN M. LACSEL,
legal counsel,
Office of Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri

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Across the NATION

Food shortage looms amid flooding

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—THE rising number of people being displaced by floods and storm surges in Northern Mindanao have threatened food supply as local government units make do with meager funds, official said yesterday.

The Office of the Civil Defense (OCD) in the region said at least 115,000 people had already fled to safety as of Wednesday while three people were confirmed killed as floods and 6-foot waves continue to batter coastal villages here and in the cities of Gingoog and Iligan.

Eighteen towns in Misamis Oriental are also flooded due to torrential rains, which the Philippine Atmospheric and Geophysical Services Administration (Pagasa) said could last for days.

In this city alone, where 46 villages remained under water, officials said funds for food assistance were running out.

"What the city government can provide is not enough despite the donations coming in from private groups or individuals since every hour the number of affected families increases," Irwin Cabiling, city information officer, told the Inquirer.

Mayor Constantino Jaraula said food supply could last for four days only.

Jaraula said aside from food, the evacuees also needed mats and blankets to warm them up inside evacuation centers.

Bishop Nereo Odchimar, of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, said the city's nine other Protestant churches were also helping out.

"There is not enough food ... whatever we cook for a meal, it has to be equally divided so everyone will have a meal even if it is not a full one for as long as it could fill their hungry stomachs," Cabiling said.

Cagayan Archbishop Antonio Ledesma said while the immediate needs of the people are being provided, the city government should also look into the root cause of the floods.

"Let us not forget the root cause of this disaster, which are the massive logging activities ... we need to look back," said Ledesma.

Armen Cuenca, head of the Oro Alert Rescue Group, said even when the rains have already weakened, they are worried about the possibility of more landslides occurring in bloodstained areas.

"The soil has loosened and we are asking residents in landslide-prone areas to leave temporarily or to bring to safer grounds the women, children, the elderly and the sick," Cuenca said.

On Wednesday, a major landslide occurred in Sitio Kabola in Barangay Lumbia, an upland village near the airport. —Grace Alhaura, Dennis Jontila, Orlando Dinoy, Romielle Cañajoid and Edwin Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

Ramos-Horta says only Filipinos can bring peace to Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—NO OUTSIDE mediator, not the Malaysians, not the Indonesians can find peace for Filipinos," Timor Leste President Jose Ramos-Horta said. "Long lasting peace can be attainable in the Philippines but only the Filipinos can do it."

Horta, who delivered a lecture at a university here Wednesday, said that peace is possible whether in Ulster, in Bosnia or in the Philippines if people are willing to reflect on how conflict began and be open for dialogs.

"First, listen, listen and try to imagine being in their shoes, maybe we ourselves can rise to raise people who fly rockets to the neighborhood," he said.

EAST Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta stresses his willingness to mediate the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and MILF during his talk at the Ateneo De Davao University in Davao City. MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

Peace rhetoric

"If state actors and non-state actors are not sincere in their beliefs, if we are not all committed to step back with humility and reflect the mistakes of the past and the situation that led to the conflict, if we don't do that, then lasting peace remains a rhetoric, a threat, it will not be realized," Horta, a Nobel Laureate for Peace in 1996, told a hall full of students and press people at the Ateneo de Davao University.

Horta, whose family had once been a Portuguese exile during the struggle for independence in East Timor, was thankful for the Filipino People Power that ousted former President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 for inspiring people around the world who are still struggling for independence.

Hope

"I'd like to tell you don't underestimate the hope you've generated (by **the people power revolution**) that change is possible," he said.

He summed students and teachers by saying that Filipinos have been found all over the world as missionaries, priests, development workers finishing overseas contract workers and that they're often been a very successful and creative people.

He said that the same creativity and resourcefulness that gave rise to Edsa people power can also be applied in bring the elusive peace in Mindanao.

"Filipinos, I observe, have always something on the side, apart from their current jobs," he said, drawing amused chuckles from his audience. "They also sell clothes, shoes, they're very resourceful, creative and enterprising."

"This creativity has made the Filipinos the few Asian country to start a diaspora," he said. "You, brilliant, creative, resourceful and enterprising Filipinos, the fire of your country of Southeast Asia, is in your hands."

Until nothy peace advocate have urged both the national government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to draft the services of Ramos-Horta as mediator in the Mindanao peace process.

Augusto Molini, executive director of nongovernment group Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), said Ramos-Horta had expressed to them his willingness to take the role if invited.

In a press statement obtained by the Inquirer, Molini said he had already relayed this to both the government and the MILF. Gerxonelou Escorte, Inquirer Mindanao

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Army report says Quezon no longer NPA stronghold

LUCBAN CITY—QUEZON PROVINCE has almost been known as a fortress of communist New People's Army rebels in Southern Tagalog. But if the report of the military is to be believed, that is now history.

The report claimed that the communist guerrillas in the province have now been reduced into a ragtag army of only 64 rebels from a total of 262 fully armed combatants in 1998.

"They are scarcely armed with the arms of defeated," said the report presented to Quezon Gov. Rafael Nantes on Wednesday in Camp Nakar, the headquarters of the Armed Forces Southern Luzon Command (Solcom).

In an exclusive interview, Solcom chief Lt. General Delfin Bangit, in a statement, likened the insurgency to lenguy chips inside an bottle, chipped bottle.

"Once you shake the five remaining chips inside, it creates lots of noise," he said.

The report said government forces had also driven the NPA from its main base in 101 villages in different parts of Quezon. Delfin T. Mallari Jr., inquirer Southern Luzon

Chiz raises fear on 'hidden agenda' in Bicol war games

ESCUDERO

LEGAZPI CITY— Opposition Sen. Francis "Chiz" Escudero said he remained wary of other items in the agenda that may be concealed in the public about the 2009 Balikatan Exercises, which will be staged in three Bicol provinces in April.

The 2009 Balikatan is a joint U.S.-Philippine military exercise, which Philippine Army officials said would focus on medical mission and engineering works in the provinces of Albay, Sorsogon and Masbate.

However, recognizing that the humanitarian mission will benefit the people, Escudero urged caution on the part of the government to make sure the RP-US military exercises will not leave our Filipino disadvantaged.

"Our government better make sure that this exercise will adhere to the letter if not been deviated to and not use it as front for other endeavors that may jeopardize and erode[illegible] from various sectors," said Escudero, who hails from Sorsogon, one of the planned sites of the Balikatan.

Escudero expressed fear that the Balikatan would be used to allow US forces to reinforce with the Philippine government's war on communist rebels in the Bicol region.

"The Balikatan should avoid, at all cost, any intervention that may meddle in our internal affairs," he said in a statement. "Any suicide force reaching it [insurgency fight] worldless ends our sovereignty."

The Communist Party of the Philippines-Simchu ordered its armed wing, the New People's Army, to increase tactical offensives against government targets to protect the Balikatan.

A rally was set on Jan. 22 to protest the planned holding of the Balikatan in Bicol, said Bren Lopez, spokesperson of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (New Patriotic Alliance) in Bicol.

"The past years the Balikatan had been in Mindanao, now, now Bicol is still considered a hotspot of communist insurgency, it is here," Lopez said. Ephrocim Agcaoili, inquirer Southern Luzon

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Four-way RP Ladies final-round shootout up

By Manny Castillo

CARAVAN, CAVITE —South Korean Lee Jeong-hwa dropped four strokes on her last four holes yesterday and settled for a one-under par 71 that still left her with a nine-stroke lead going into the final round of the RTH Philippine Ladies Amateur championship at Southwoods here.

The 34-year-old Lee took a double-bogey-6 on the 14th for a 144 tally, just a stroke clear of another Korean, Winnie Kim, Leonor Maculo and the charging Dottie Ardina.

Shine Lee does a day-late lift

Shine Lee shot a day-late 69 despite bogeys on Nos. 16 and 17, joint first-round leader Maculo churned out a level 73, while Ardina bounced back from a 75 Wednesday with a 71 yesterday to keep the race wide open with only 18 holes left at the island resort layout.

It was a bogey-free round for the pint-sized Ardina, the crash junior world champion seeking to win this event for the first time.

Sarabiha Barnejuli and Shiran Lapuyl, who shared the first round lead together with Lee and Miranda Soundcraft with identical 76s and virtually kissed their dreams goodbye with 23s.

Defending champion Chihiro Ikeda also bowed out of it all, struggling to a 78 that left her 22 strokes off the pace at 166.

Scrap scores take Stinko

194—Lee, 69(FR)/75/7; 10—C. Ardina 75/71; Maculo 73/71; 5; Lee (KR) 74/70; 11th—C. Santos 80(R) 75/74; 6—L. Rivera 75/71; 7. Ikeda 78/75; 8. Bernejuli 77/75; 9. Lapuyl 77/75; 10. Kim—E. Ardina 75/75.

Hatton fight on; Pacman settles for 50-50

By Cudell P. Tapas

THE MANNY PACQUIAO-RICKY HATTON showdown will push through after all.

A day after the fight looked doomed, Top Rank promoter Bob Arum reminded said the duel between boxing's top pound-for-pound fighters and its 140-lb king is back "under control" because Pacquiao has agreed to a 50-50 split with Hatton.

The Los Angeles Times yesterday reported that Pacquiao is expected to sign the fight contract "sometime Thursday."

"There was a lot of confusion about why we did it (50-50), but everyone now understands why this is a good deal," Arum told the LA Times/Union-Tribune. "This thing is going to happen. Yesterday (Tuesday) was dummy Today we (are) talking deals in order."

Pacquiao's lawyer, Franklin Gacal, on Monday said the Filipino superstar was demanding a 60-40 revenue sharing for the fight and insisted that they would look for another opponent if their terms were not met for the fight that is expected to gross $58.4 million.

The demand prompted Hatton's handlers to threaten the Filipino champion with a lawsuit and Arum to call off the fight since the American promoter and the British Hatton's handlers had verbally agreed to equal sharing late last month.

Pacquiao apparently backed out on his demand due to the expected windfall from his pay-per-view revenue in Britain, which Arum said is "unthinkable to Hatton." The Filipino would get half of the PPV revenue.

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Pharex sustains surge; Hapee up

By Cedelf P. Tupas

FILIPINO-AMERICAN ROOKIE CHRIS ROSS UNLOADED THE GAME-winning shot with four seconds left as Pharex completed its rise from the brink of elimination by slipping past Toyota Otis, 71-68, last night in the PBL-DY Five Conference Cup at the Emilio Aguinaldo College Gym.

Ross dribbled past a phalanx of Toyota defenders, before stopping back to create space for his jumper from 17 feet that shattered a 69-all tie and propelled the Generics to the quarterfinals.

Pharex will next play Hapee, which boasts a twice-to-beat edge, after coming from behind to nip early semifinalist Harbour Centre, 78-75, earlier.

"Tough games bring out the best in your players and Chris just stood out today," said Pharex coach Cecile Tan of the top rookie pick, who fired with a triple-double with 23 points, 10 rebounds and 7 assists.

DIRECT VIEWPOINT
Quotable Plus: Sports Columnist
7 p.m.—Barrera vs. Morgan blog by no—Hapee vs. Pharex

Toyota guard BJ Jacinto led the game with a triple from the corner with 29 seconds left, one minute after a Ross layup for 69-67.

Pharex languished at the rather far short of the conference, losing all its games in the first round, before going 2-1 in the second but included a four-game streak.

The Complete Protectors battled back from 19 points down in the second half, when Jerwyn Cruz fired 13 of his 18 points, including a putback that put his team ahead to stay, 75-73, with barely a minute remaining.

Rookie Lance Custodio, who was released 12 minutes, nailed two free throws to put the final score.

The Beijing Pro Move Bois opportunity to forge overtime as Head Aerobic Rubbed a triple But were Fierbose down to in for two-game losing streak in the tournament.

The scores
first game
QUEZ 78—Cruz 18, Custodio 14, Hollowbay-ham 12, Ilustre 7, Angeles 7, Espinosa 6, Ilustre 6, Jacinto 6, Ilustre 5, Angeles 5, Yong 3
HARBOUR CENTRE 75—Barroca 16, Fernandez 15, Mamuyac 9, Arao 9, Jacildo 7, Cacho 6, Ramos 5, Reyes 3, Ramos 2, Ibanez 2, Bautista 1, Sagaral 1, Sevarino 0, Cantilog 0
Quarters: 20-19, 41-41, 57-57, 78-75
Second Game
PHAREX 71—Ross 23, Salvador 10, Mabao 10, Ilustre 10, Gotladera 7, Alfonso 4, Delagdio 2, Co 1, Agullo 0, Mina 0, Corrales 0
TOYOTA OTIS 68—Vinuya-an 15, Bangalan 12, Wilson 11, Fajardo 9, Jacinto 7, Tolentino 7, Tanco 6, Lim 2, Arbes 0, Alapo 0
Quarters: 17-15, 32-30, 49-44, 71-68

SILVER Ramos (left) runs the final push before pouring off for the win in yesterday's National Open road race. See story on A-17.

Asian Tour qualifier: Bondoc hangs on

PATTAYA, THAILAND—ERIC GINE Bondoc survived the 36-hole cut among eight Filipinos in the final stage of the Asian Tour's Qualifying School Wednesday that with rounds of 74-76. Bondoc was 11 shots off the leaders in a tie for 53rd place.

Only the top-40 and ties will gain playing rights for 2009.

Failing to advance were Marvin Dumandan (144), Jay Bayron (146), Carmen Cesar (157), Michael Ribal (157), Chito Saunar (158), Kevin Tayao (167) and Eric Sedrez (170).

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LTFRB: There's enough supply of LPG for cabs

Says dealers have buffer stocks that will last until February

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

THE LAND TRANSPORTATION FRANCHISING and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) said there is no shortage of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) used by taxis in Metro Manila.

In a press briefing yesterday, LTFRB chair Thompson Lantion said he received an assurance from auto-LPG dealers that they have enough buffer stocks to last until February.

"By March, we expect supply of auto LPG from Malaysia to come in as well as other dealers of auto-LPG. I found out how prices of LPG will reverse to the usual number," said Lantion in Filipino.

Lantion met with auto LPG dealers upon the request of the Philippine National Taxi Operators Association (PNTOA) over reports of hoarding of auto-LPG as prices of LPG have fallen sharply compared with gasoline prices.

"There is no problem with supply it was delayed coming from Malaysia. Auto-LPG dealers have assured that distribution of LPG will normalize by next week" said Lantion when asked about hoarding.

About 30,000 hybrid taxis in Metro Manila use auto LPG which sells for P17 to P18 per liter versus P35 per liter for gasoline and P32 per liter for diesel.

Receipts to be issued

In the same briefing, Lantion also said that taxis will be required to issue receipts, either generated by metered machines or manually by July this year.

"This is an additional monitoring (so trying to put a fixed value to taxi fares, usually higher than the normal fare) and refund to convey," Lantion said.

Meanwhile, industry leader Petron Corporation assured its customers of adequate LPG supply to serve their requirements.

In a statement issued yesterday, Petron said an LPG tanker carrying 2,000 MT was arriving today at its Bataan refinery and it was requesting additional shipments in the next few days.

TRAFFIC OBSTRUCTION
Motorists passing by Scout Chuatoco Street in Quezon City Thursday had to slow down to avoid a tree which fell on the road and caused a minor traffic congestion. Residents helped clear the road of obstruction. ANDY ZAPATA

Having your pictures taken? Read on

By Nancy Carvajal

SELECT TIME YOU WANT TO HAVE your photos taken even inside crowded malls, be careful.

Yesterday, a 23-year-old restaurant manager filed a complaint at the Quezon City police against a photographer of a photo studio inside a popular mall in Interior.

Chief Insp. Cherry Lou Donato, chief of the General Investigation Section of QCPD, said the manager had gone to the photo studio in the mall to have her photos taken.

Donato said Bernard Lee, the infamous photographer of Great Image Photo Studio, told the victim he would take her photos for free because she was so beautiful.

Inside the studio, the victim was allegedly persuaded into doing some sexy poses, which apparently emboldened Lee to touch her breasts.

"The victim said the photographer allegedly touched her breasts after the suspect had convinced her to take off her pants supposedly for a sexy pose," Donato said. She added that Lee denied the allegation.

The manager filed complaint of acts of lasciviousness against the photographer.

Donato advised customers they should make sure having a companion inside the studio.

Donato said that a representative of the studio had asked for a copy of the complaint, but refused to give their customer to reporters.

Huge anti-Chacha streamer causes brownout in Makati

By Allison W. Lopez

IT WAS GONE IN THE WIND.

A huge anti-Charter (anti-Cha-cha) streamer still by strong breeze caused a brownout at the Makati City Hall compound yesterday after it fell on a high tension wire.

The 30x19 feet tarpaulin, which said "Makati says no to Cha-cha," completely detached from its cord at 20 feet (tied to streetcar 8 from the right side of the 23rd floor around 10:30 a.m.

"Hindi naman kinaya ng sobrang lakas ng hangin sa itaas. Kumalas ang ringgy yung tarpaulin at nawalit sa high tension wire kaya nag-arky (The weather) hadd is due to the strong wind. It detached from the rings and got tangled up with the high-tension wire causing it to trip)," building administrator Edgardo Gundran told the reporter.

The tarpaulin was put up Monday for Mayor Jejomar Binay's declaration of the city as a "No Cha-cha zone" on Tuesday.

No one was injured, but the incident resulted in temporary power outage at both new and old city hall buildings. About five people were reported stuck inside the elevator of the old city hall for 10 minutes.

Engineer Gundran, however, explained that it was because the older structure used a manual generator unlike the new one half-which required power from its auto-matic generator after only eight seconds.

He said utility men from the Meralco immediately arrived to fix the problem and remove the tarpaulin, which had small burns on its back.

Binay's another tarpaulin bearing the words "Makati: No Cha-cha zone" was installed on the left side, the engineer said (they removed it at 5 p.m. as precautionary measure.

"We have yet to consult the mayor about where to relocate the tarpaulins because they're too big for the old city hall," said Gundran.

The Makati city government, according to Binay's representative Joey Salgado, did not spend a single cent for the "donated" tarpaulins.

DID YOU KNOW

A NUMBER of alumni case the University of Santo Tomas were named after Dominican priests who initiated the founding of the school from missionaries to its current location in Sampaloc, Manila as: 1605 Frey Antre Pedro Bezal, Padre Campa and Padre Herrera. (SFE)

Bumabaha: Jupiter Pinnock

Early bird QC taxpayers get 10 percent discount

By John M. Aurelio

THE QUEZON CITY GOVERNMENT yesterday encouraged businessmen to settle their taxes by Jan. 20 for them to avail of a 10 percent discount.

Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. said the incentive for prompt tax payments was part of his government's efforts to be business-friendly.

Under Ordinance 1866-2004, those who would their business taxes within the first 20 days of the year will be entitled to a 10 percent discount.

According to Councilor Aurelio Irwin Jr., the 2001 ordinance has improved revenue collection in Quezon City which earned more than P3.9 billion in taxes last year.

"It is thanks to this ordinance that business owners are now more encouraged to pay their taxes on time," he told the lawmen.

Irwin explained that the incentive has proven to be effective in encouraging residents to settle their dues promptly or even before the deadline.

On the other hand, those who fail to settle their business taxes and fees by Jan. 20 will be charged a 25 percent surcharge and a monthly interest of 2 percent.

To accommodate the taxpayers who are expected to flock to City Hall before the Jan. 20 deadline, Belmonte ordered the city treasurer's office and the business permits and licensing office to extend their working hours from Jan. 14 to 20.

In line with the mayor's directive, city treasurer Dr. Victor Endriga said that they will also be open on weekends.

From Monday to Friday, the two offices will operate from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

On Saturday and Sunday, the working hours will be from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"We are optimistic that tax collections for the first quarter of 2009 will exceed the P1.4 billion we posted during the first three months of 2008," Endriga said.

At the same time, he announced that residents who pay their real property tax before March 31 will get a 20 percent discount.

URBAN SCENE
Although his cavalcades may look exotic, this pleasure of a man going on a carabao ride was taken in the busy city of Marikina, right beside the Tumana River. (JOEY ARGUELLES)

Manila eyes recreation center for city's elderly

By Tina G. Santos

IN SUPPORT OF THE UNITED Nations' call for governments to establish new healthcare systems for the elderly, the Manila City government—with the help of former Sen. Edito Barde—has proposed the establishment of a recreation center in the Manila Boystown in Marikina City.

On Monday, Barde presented Mayor Alfredo Lim with a proposal for the construction of a center he called the "Golden Eagles Arcadia" which would be exclusively for senior citizens.

Barde said that the center would be a hotel-type building where elderly people who have retirement money or looking for a work and retreat could go.

Based on his proposal, the center would also have a hall/convention hall, a gymnasium, library, a pool and a conservatory, save for a beauty parlor, barbershop, drugstore, grocery and spa.

"There is a need for the establishment of an institution where this segment of our society can hope to receive attention, care, protection and assistance in order for them to continue living productive members of society, embraced by the principles of independence, participation, self-fulfillment and care with dignity and pride," Barde said.

For his part, Lim said that one of the priorities of his administration was to give attention to and care for the elderly and even the homeless, who deserve to be given recognition for their valuable contributions to society and the country as a whole.

NPD wants police cars equipped with GPS device

By Beverly T. Halaterial

POLICEMEN IN THE CITIES OF Caloocan, Malabon and Valenzuela are planning to go high-tech—making use of the global positioning system (GPS)—in their fight against crime.

The policemen from the three cities—which are under the jurisdiction of the Northern Police District—want to install a GPS device in their patrol cars for them to be able to improve their response rate to calls for help.

PNP director, Chief Supt. Edu. G. Javier, said he has already set up a meeting between his police chiefs and the company which installed GPS devices in the patrol cars of the Manila Police District.

"I presented the idea to them and I will soon present this to the mayors also. He will need to tap into the city budgets to study to develop the capability of the local police," Javier said in an interview.

The NPD is actually composed of the three cities and Navotas which only has nine installed GPS device in each of its 19 patrol cars.

The monitoring system is hooked up to the laptop computer of Navotas Mayor Toby Tanguo to enable him to personally monitor the whereabouts of each patrol cars.

The GPS service provider, Philippine Long Distance Telephone (PLDT) Co., is expected to charge the city government a monthly fee of P47,880 (or P2,500 monthly for each police car).

The company has yet to bill Tanguo because it is still finalizing the GPS device in four police cars.

The GPS device cars satellite navigation to pinpoint the exact location of a vehicle.

According to Javier, hooking up their police cars to the GPS system will help them improve their reaction time.

They will be able to see immediately which police cars are most accessible and deploy them to assist the "hot spot."

In an added feature, the GPS technology will also enable police chiefs and city mayors to monitor whether or not their publicly-funded police cars are being used properly.

The system is also capable of determining if a certain patrol car's engine is running or not. This way, police officials will be able to ascertain whether their men are wasting gas.

Suspected bike thief killed in shootout with QC cops

By Nancy C. Carvajal

A SHOOTOUT OCCURRED BETWEEN policemen and two suspected robbers in Quezon City on Wednesday night, leaving one of the suspected.

Supt. Maximiliano Pedrozo, Quezon City Police District Station 5 commander, said the two men took a passenger in the motorcycle of Boots Ephraim on Road 20, Bagong Pag-asa around 9:30 p.m.

Pedrozo said, the victim, a businessman from Novaliches, reported the incident to Senior Insp. Roy Medina and PO3 Ronald Adona who were on patrol in the area.

The two policemen, accompanied by Ephraim, spotted the men as found a police car until they chased upon the two men who resisted to be taking to talk with the motorcycle they had just taken.

Before the policemen could approach them, however, the two men opened fire, prompting the lawmen to fire back.

One of the two men was killed on the spot while the other escaped.

MetroBriefs

Barangay chair to be suspended

THE MAKATI City Council has reportedly decided to suspend for 60 days the barangay chair of San Lorenzo after it found sufficient basis for investigating allegations about his improper participation in questionable transactions involving millions of pesos worth of barangay funds. A source, who asked for anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to media, told the Inquirer that San Lorenzo chair Joshua John Santiago would be served the suspension order "as soon as possible." The source said the councilors found Santiago's reply to the complaint filed by residents—Ernesto Mora, Rea Lagos-Tuazon, Brigido Silang, Jocelyn Bernardo and Marissa Ibale—"insufficient." Santiago's mother said the accusations against her son were part of a "demolition job" because of his opposition to an ordinance reclassifying the boundaries of his barangay.

Allison M. Lopez

Body found in Pasig River

THE DECOMPOSING body of a man was fished out Wednesday morning from the Pasig River in Manila. Manila Police District homicide investigators described the body as between 30 and 35 years old, clad in a green T-shirt with long sleeves and color of orange short pants. Police reports said the body was discovered floating in the river at around 6:30 a.m. behind the Seven Enterprises at 3400 Lakeshore, Barrio Sta. Mesa, Lusiana Montejo, an employee of the firm, said he was washing horses when he saw the body. He immediately sought the help of his coworkers in taking the body out of the water. Homicide investigators were still determining if the man was the victim of robbery or if he accidentally fell into the river. Some of the Crime Operatives, however, said there were no signs of external injuries on the victim's body which may have led to the cause of his death.

Jeannette I. Andrade

Man charged with homicide

A 40-YEAR-OLD caretaker was arraigned for his daughter's live-in partner two weeks ago and charged yesterday at the Manila Regional Trial Court. Orangutan with homicide was Domingo Conde, a resident of 2761 Line St. in Sta. Cruz, Manila. Assistant City Prosecutor Raul Quicoho told Conde's trial at RTC-000. Court records showed that Conde unlawfully saw evidence to the police a day after he stabbed Ismael Kenneth Sanoy, 30, a resident of Linsay Street, Tondo, during a heated argument on Pilot Avenue, Sta. Cruz. Sotelo's relatives who witnessed the incident on Dec. 30, 2008 told investigators they saw the accused and the victim having an argument. Conde, they added, later grabbed a knife from the trio of an unidentified vendor and stabbed Sanoy several times before fleeing on foot.

Tina G. Santos

Sickly father needs help

PEDRITO Tongco's love for his children is the driving force behind his desire to overcome his kidney ailment. Tongco is the 40-year-old father of Michael and Michelle, who, due to their father's illness, have been forced to quit school. He is the third in a household. A resident of Ilaya Bukid, Bulacan, Tongco is undergoing hemodialysis treatment at the Philippine Kidney Dialysis Foundation on Quezon Street, Quezon City. He is a vendor. Each session, however, costs P1,800. "I appeal to you for financial help . . . my children are still young," Tongco said in his letter to the Inquirer. Tongco can be contacted at 0921-2045277 or 0927-6288870. Donations may be received through his bank account at Metrobank, 088 (Bachao branch). His account number is 136-0884614.

Santiago B. Alvarado

Grand alumni homecoming

THE MIKE LIANE (Bethy) High School will celebrate its 60th annual general alumni homecoming on Feb. 8 at Palacio de Maynila at M. H. del Pilar Street, Malate, Manila. Dubbed as a "Celebration of memories through music and movies," the event has the theme "Bridging the past and the present for a brighter future." For more information, call 5722448, 4903331, 8536333 or e-mail mikeliane@yahoo.com.ph.

BIN LADEN

Obama: Osama, Qaida still 'No. 1 threat'

WASHINGTON — PRESIDENT-ELECT Barack Obama said Wednesday that al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden remain the "number one threat" to the country, after the elusive militant leader warned of new threats in his rare on the West.

In his first audio announcement in eight months, Bin Laden called on all Muslims to take revenge against Israel for its deadly offensive in Gaza, saying the onslaught had been timed to take advantage of the dying days of George W. Bush's presidency.

"Bin Laden and al-Qaida are our number one threat when it comes to America's security," Obama told reporters after the emergence of the 22-minute audio recording titled "A Call by Jihad to Stop Aggression Against Gaza."

"We're going to do everything in our power to make sure that they cannot create any havens that can attack Americans. That's the bottom line," added Obama.

The US Armed Services Intelligence Group said it believed the recording, in which Bin Laden vowed to the legacy that Bush is leaving Obama, was authentic.

The White House declined to immediately authenticate the statement or having been the man who carries a $25-million bounty on his head.

But spokesperson Gordon Johndroe said: "It appears that the tape does not contain any new information and appears to be an attempt to remain relevant at a time when al-Qaida's ideology, methods, and agenda are being questioned and challenged throughout the world."

The audio tape came as Bush, whose presidency was dominated by the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks launched by Bin Laden's militants, prepares to hand power to Obama on Tuesday.

"Bush's team mapped ... that 71 per cent of the American people are pleased with the direction of the government who bugged Bush down to wear that they have nothing to do with," Bin Laden said in the recording.

"We drowned them in economic turmoil that crushed their cars. He pursued a heavy legacy to his successor."

Bin Laden, who usually appears to have outlasted the presidency of his arch-foe Bush, said Obama was already facing different choices amid two ongoing campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"It is most difficult for a man to submit the legacy of a long guerrilla warfare with a patient and stubborn adversary, a war which it doesn't for long has been.

"If he withdraws from the war, it is a stubborn defeat. And if he continues it, he drowns in economic crisis," said Bin Laden, who US officials believe has found refuge in Pakistan's mountainous areas on the Afghan border.

"How can it be that he passed over to him two wars, cut one war, and he is unable to overcome them. We see no our path to open other fronts, with God's blessing."

Bin Laden hailed Palestine, the Palestinian province of Waziristan, North Africa and Somalia as among the new battlefields where his fighters would take on the West. AFP

Saudi Sept. 11 suspect tortured in Guantanamo

WASHINGTON — THE UNITED STATES may never be able to prosecute an alleged plotter of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks because he was tortured, a top Pentagon official said in an interview published Wednesday.

Susan Crawford, who is charged with deciding whether to bring Guantanamo detainees to trial, told The Washington Post that US interrogators had tortured Ammar'i bone suspected Al-Qaida ca.

"We tortured Qahtani," she said, that becoming the first senior Bush administration official to publicly state that a detainee was tortured.

"My treatment met the legal definition of torture. And that's why I did not refer the case" for prosecution said Crawford, who is the convening authority of military commissions, a system established by the administration of President George W. Bush to try accused enemy combatants.

Crawford said US military interrogators repeatedly subjected Qahtani, 30, to sustained isolation, sleep deprivation, nudity and prolonged exposure to cold, leaving him in a "life-threatening condition."

"The techniques they used were all authorized, but the manner in which they applied them was overly aggressive and too persistent," she said.

"The sum just a combination of things that had a medical impact on him, that hurt his health. It was abusive and so called it as I and consider." AFP

Bush's record: The case for, the case against

BUSH

WASHINGTON — US PRESIDENT George W. Bush has his war-ravaging highs and lows in opinion polls over eight years at the White House, amid deep divisions over his policies at home and abroad.

Here are short versions of the case against, and the case for, Bush's record on issues like the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the economy and other major questions.

● **Terrorism**—Against: Bush missed, or ignored, the warning signs ahead of the global terrorist meltdown. He encouraged deregulation, which some blame for the crisis, and oversaw a massive government expansion in size and have cost. The plan he ran he pushed early in his first term helped squander the budget surplus he inherited from Bill Clinton and now hands Barack Obama a deficit that may pass a trillion dollars.

For: The administration ran the longest early but Congress refused to act. Bush's power up for few months principles to launch an unprecedented US government intervention in the economy and avert what could have been a meltdown on the scale of the Great Depression of the 1930s. He cut cuts stimulated the economy and fueled 50 months of job growth, and the deficit is as large part as an expected early spending after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

● **Iraq**—Against: Bogus he was, Bush hocked traditional US allies like France and Germany to invade Iraq without a UN mandate and other short-circuiting UN weapons inspections that could have revealed the absence of the weapons of mass destruction on the eve of the public case for war. Washington had no plan for the post-invasion, allowing the country to sink into bloody chaos that has cost more than 4,000 US lives and left countless Iraqis dead or driven from their homes.

For: The US intelligence community not Bush, got the weapons of mass destruction wrong. Saddam Hussein was a threat to US interests and to Israel and was no shoo-in of a classic 9/11 confidence. After the Sept. 11 attacks, it would have been unwise to bet that he would not develop weapons of mass destruction or put them in intent to terrorists. The US invasion liberated 25 million people, and the historic 2007 "surge" of troops ordered by Iraq.

● **Afghanistan**—Against: Bush shifted his attention too quickly to Iraq, moving resources that might have secured Afghanistan, the real "central front" in the war on terrorism. The move allowed the Taliban to regroup and led to the failure to catch Osama bin Laden in Tora Bora.

For: The United States liberated 25 million Afghans from the Islamist militia and never stopped working to stabilize and rebuild the country. US forces stand to double between now and mid-2009.

● **North Korea**—Against: Bush wasted his hands on efforts to engage North Korea, which he lumped in with Iran and Saddam Hussein's Iraq in an "axis of evil," and effectively sealed off a deal that kept the North's nuclear weapons program in check. Pyongyang now has enough plutonium for an estimated 10 nuclear bombs.

For: The North was dueling on the 2004 Agreed Framework. And Bush forged a promising six-party framework grouping China, Japan, Russia, North and South Korea, and the United States, to work on giving the North economic and diplomatic rewards for dismantling its atomic weapons programs.

● **Middle East Peace**—Against: Bush mostly kept the peace process at arm's length until 2007, content to support Israel's ill-fated rather than set as a power broker with the Palestinians. He strongly resisted Palestinian elections go-forward, resulting in the victory of Hamas, which went on to seize control of Gaza.

For: Bush was the first sitting US president to call for the creation of an independent Palestinian state living at peace with Israel and was largely built a regional consensus that this is the way to a lasting peace. He has reinforced legitimate Palestinian political and security institutions.

● **Middle East**—Against: The war in Iraq has inflamed the region against the US and helped terrorists recruit. Iran emerged stronger than Bush years since invasion from even.

For: Bush has promoted democracy reforms in Iraq and Lebanon, and even sees Libya's decision to give up cooking nuclear weapons and seek formal ties with the US.

● **Iran**—Against: Bush rejected European diplomacy for years, finally endorsing it in his second term, even as the Islamic republic continued to pursue suspect nuclear activities.

For: Bush leaves Obama a solid international framework for confronting up pressure on Tehran.

● **The global war on terrorism, and the US image worldwide**—Against: Guantanamo Bay, holding prisoners indefinitely without charges there and in secret prisons, interrogation practices widely seen as torture, the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, and other activities have badly tarnished the US image overseas.

For: The US does not torture. Osama remains free and other countries would have kept the United States safe. Washington is the most generous international aid donor and continues to be a haven for democratic refugees worldwide.

● **Climate change**—Against: By ignoring the Kyoto Protocol and rejecting restrictive quotas on so-called "greenhouse gases," Bush has fiddled while the world threatens to burn.

For: The US Senate rejected Kyoto before Bush took office. Under Bush, US air pollution dropped 12 percent. And Bush has for the first time forged an international consensus that an climate pact can work without imposing some restrictions on growing economies like India and China. AFP

Skycar from Britain to Mali

British inventor set to 'fly' car from London to Timbuktu

A GROUP of adventurers are set to set from London for Timbuktu on Jan. 16, planning to travel by flying car. The plan is to drive where there are roads, but to fly over the Straits of Gibraltar, the Atlas Mountains and the Sahara.

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The WORLD

John Lawrence B. Ganza

Street battles rage in Gaza

Peace hopes rise as Palestinian toll tops 1,000

GAZA CITY—ISRAELI TANKS LUNGED DEEPEST yet into Gaza's cities, sparking ferocious battles with Hamas on Thursday even as hopes rose for a truce to end the war that has killed more than 1,000 Palestinians.

[illegible] chief Ban Ki-moon arrived in Tel Aviv and hinted cool-eyed envoys to Egypt and the United States could a diplomatic push to end the 20-day-old war launched to stop Hamas rocket fire, in which an estimated 660 civilians have died.

Egypt has been spearheading Western-backed ceasefire efforts and Israeli envoys drove to Cairo to be briefed on developments in Gaza on Thursday after Hamas was reported to have accepted the draft.

The Islamist rule of the Gaza Strip, however, indicated only support for its "broad outlines."

On the ground in Gaza, battle raged as tanks advanced into the heart of the Tal Al-Hawa neighborhood in the southwest, outskirts of Gaza's main population center, sending hundreds of terrified civilians fleeing.

Human rumors fired in the advancing troops with anti-tank rockets and mortars and thick columns of black smoke rose in the sky above Gaza City in the south, east and north.

At least 32 people have died in Gaza on Thursday, including a woman and her three children in their [illegible], but the exact number of casualties was not immediately clear as the clashes blocked ambulances from reaching the wounded, medics said.

Dozens of families sheltered inside the Al-Quds Hospital in Tal Al-Hawa after tanks [illegible] in other areas.

"I brought the children to the hospital because they were scared at home, but here they are even more terrified," 40-year-old Hussein said as he looked after his wife and five children in the pediatric ward.

"We can't take this any longer. Look at my children, they're trembling," he said as explosions ripped through the air like thunderclaps and Israeli troops and Hamas fighters clashed less than 300 meters away.

Israel surprised yesterday the densely populated territory with some 70 strikes overnight, targeting Palestinian fighters, rocket-launching sites and weapons storage sites, including a mosque in the south, the army said.

Medics in Gaza [illegible] 27 rockets and mortars into Israel in the space of several hours in the morning, it said.

Since Israel unleashed its Operation Cast Lead on Dec. 27, at least 1,005 people have been killed and another 5,000 wounded, according to Gaza medics. Among the dead are at least 395 children, 109 women, 127 elderly men and 12 medics, they say.

On the Israeli side, 10 soldiers and three civilians have died as a result of combat or rocket fire.

In an article published Thursday in Britain's Independent newspaper, Hamas prime minister in Gaza Ismail Haniya spelled out the Islamists' conditions for a truce and appealed to the West to stop Israel's offensive.

"Israel must end its criminal war and slaughter of our people, lift completely and unconditionally its illegal siege of the Gaza Strip, open all our border crossings and completely withdraw from Gaza," Hamas wrote.

"After that we would consider future options," said Haniya.

Although Egyptian and Spanish diplomats said on Wednesday that Hamas had accepted Egypt's truce plan, a Gaza-based leader of the Islamist group said after talks with officials in Cairo that it did not reject its "brood outlines," without accepting the plan outright.

A senior US Department of State official told AFP that more work needed to be done before a truce could be reached in the fighting.

"It's not a done deal yet. They're still working it. There are a number of things conditions that are having to be dealt with," he said.

AFP

SMOKE rises during an Israeli military operation in Gaza City on Jan. 15. Israeli tanks pushed downtown Gaza City as ground troops drove deep into a wounded neighborhood for the first time, sending terrified residents fleeing for cover and reducing up the pressure on Hamas rulers to accept a truce proposal. —

EU pleads with Ukraine, Russia for gas

MOSCOW, Russia—EU STATES cut off for days from Russian gas to heating homes were pleaded on Wednesday for an end to wrangling between Moscow and Kiev which has stalled a deal to restore fuel supplies.

European Commission chief Jose Manuel Barroso called the crisis "unacceptable and intolerable" and said the EU executive would advise the bloc's firms to sue Russian and Ukrainian energy companies unless gas supplies were restored quickly.

A deal brokered by the EU, which gets a quarter of its gas from Russia, was supposed to get supplies moving on Tuesday, with international monitors in place to ensure that Ukraine was not siphoning off any gas, as Moscow has alleged.

Russia began pumping gas again to Europe via Ukraine on Tuesday, but the EU said little to none was flowing yet to countries downstream suffering urgent energy shortages.

Russia accused Ukraine of deliberately cutting gas to Europe while Kiev said Russia had to be provided to Ukraine so there was not enough pressure in the pipelines to pump it on.

Leaders from some of the worst affected countries visited the two contenders on Wednesday in demand a swift end to the crisis, with eight patience is [illegible] with both sides.

"The biggest risk to both Russia and Ukraine is the issue of trust," Bulgarian Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev told Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

"The dispute has been ongoing for a few years but it should not have fazed countries [illegible]," he said. Reuters

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- Developers cast eye on Burnham Park /B6

Lito Raul O. Morales • Assistant Lito Corrie S. Mariano

BUSINESS

Remittances rose 10.5% to $1.3B in Nov.

In first 11 months, money sent in by workers reached $15B

By Michelle V. Ramos

REMITTANCES FROM FILIPINOS WORKING ABROAD still managed to grow in November despite the hard times.

According to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, which monitors the amount of foreign exchange entering the country, remittances sent by overseas Filipino workers amounted to $1.3 billion in November 2008, up 10.5 percent over that of the same month the previous year.

The latest annual growth figure in remittances was faster than the 3.5 percent growth registered in October 2008, remittances that month reached $1.4 billion.

"Steady stream of remittances from overseas Filipinos continues to provide the economy with much needed foreign exchange liquidity in the midst of a challenging external environment," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. yesterday said in a statement.

The November data on OFW remittances brought the cumulative figure for the first 11 months of 2008 to $15.02 billion, up 15.1 percent year on year.

Remittance figures reported by the BSP does not include funds flowing through informal channels, such as unlicensed money changers, as well as friends and relatives.

REMITTANCES /B2

Bank lending continues to grow at a healthy pace

THE FINANCIAL MELTDOWN in the United States and Europe has so far failed to influence availability of credit in the Philippines, as bank lending continued to grow at a healthy pace in November.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday reported that lending by the country's commercial and universal banks grew by 21.7 percent in November 2008 over that of the same period the previous year.

The latest growth figure in lending translated to P1.93 trillion worth of outstanding loans as of November. In the same month in 2007, banks' outstanding loans only totaled P1.6 trillion.

If reverse repurchase agreements (RRPs) were factored in, outstanding loans of commercial and universal bank loans would amount to P2.23 trillion, up 23 percent from only P1.8 trillion.

RRPs are banks' placements with the BSP's overnight borrowing facility.

"Despite the ongoing global credit crunch, domestic lending continues to enjoy a sufficient liquidity cushioning in the economy to support growth-promoting activities," the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said in a statement.

Although the BSP strives to administer the comprehensive loans of banks, the regulator also encourages these institutions to lend aggressively in order to help jump-prime the economy, especially at a time when the world is experiencing an eco-

BANK /B1

Currencies

peso per
FREQUENTLY-USED RATE

$1 = ₱47.37 ▲

as of 4 p.m. Jan. 15, 2009

Shares close 1.5% lower

SHARE PRICES YESTERDAY CLOSED 1.5 percent lower after losses on Wall Street, dealers said.

The composite index gave up 29.96 points to close at 1,954.37, while the all-shares index shed 1.2 percent, or 16.36 points, to 1,350.23.

A total of $40.112 million shares worth P1.14 billion ($23.8 million) changed hands.

Decliners swamped gainers 70 to 17, while 28 issues were unchanged.

SHARES /B2

Keeping corporate control

PARANOIA OR PREEMPTIVE ACT?

Either description may apply, depending on your politics, to the reported plan of First Philippine Holdings Corp. (FPHC), the power investor holding company of the Lopez family, to amend six by-laws to prevent hostile parties from getting into its board of directors.

Earlier, Sarmiento Holdings Corp., also a Lopez-owned company, entered into a voting trust agreement with Lopez Inc. for the latter to act as its voting trustee for its stocks in FPHC to prevent itself from hostile takeover attempts.

The twin moves appear to be part of the family's reaction to changes in the corporate structure of Meralco, its flagship company. Brought about by, among others, the forced Corp.'s purchase of government-owned stocks in the power firm.

The "stealing of the steppes" by the Lopezes does not come as a surprise. Any businessman worth his salt who finds himself in a similar situation is expected to do the same.

The law recognizes that truism as it provides stockholders with certain rights and processes that enable them to protect their interests, as long as their acts conform to the principles of fair play and transparency.

Proxy

The "proxy system" is the means often used by holders of sizeable, but not majority, stocks to gain control of their firm.

A proxy is a written authorization by a stockholder to a person, who may or may not be a stockholder, to vote on his behalf on matters that may be raised during the stockholders' meeting.

In a corporation such as these controlling stock ownership, every vote, whether cast in person or through proxy, counts in the election of directors.

Ordinarily a proxy is valid only for the meeting for which it is issued.

But if the stockholder wants to, he can extend it any one time or cover all stockholders' meetings that may be held for five years. Beyond that period, the proxy becomes invalid.

Thus, the challenge to whoever wants to gain control of a corporation is to get the proxy preferably good for five years, of such members of stockholders that will assure him or his group of the votes needed to elect the majority in the board.

Once that proxy is given, its beneficiary has to make good on whatever commitments he may have made to the stockholders to convince him to issue the proxy.

If he fails to deliver, the stockholder can cancel the proxy through a letter of revocation, or by attending the stockholders' meeting and casting his vote personally, which may not be in favor of the previous proxy holder.

Voting trust

An improved (and more effective) version of the proxy system is the voting trust agreement.

Under this arrangement, a stockholder (usually an aggrieved one) or a trustee transferring to the latter, for a period of not more than five years or any one time, his title over his shares.

That temporary transfer is recorded in the books of the corporation. In the process, the stockholder's stock certificates are cancelled and a new ones are issued in favor of the trustee.

By virtue of that title change, the trustee acquires all the voting and other rights that the subject stocks are entitled to during the life of the agreement.

To be enforceable, however, the agreement should be notarized and filed with the corporation and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The filing requirement is aimed at making sure the agreement is not used to commit fraudulent acts, or to circumvent the law against monopolies and illegal combinations in restraint of trade.

Unlike a proxy, which as a rule, can be cancelled by its issuer anytime without explaining his action, that voting authority given to a trustee is irrevocable during the agreed period.

The advantage of the trusteeship arrangement is it is more reliable and effective in gaining control over a corporation.

Confidence

Boardroom domination can also be done through "pooling" arrangements where stockholders who have mutually beneficial interests (which include blood or affinity relations) agree beforehand to vote together on certain corporate issues.

The business agreements of this nature are often used when new investors are invited or express interest in investing in existing corporations.

The stockholder choice to vote his own influence over the prospective investee is usually the point person in his group who holds the direct responsible contractual service to the future.

The rule of the thumb in situations like this is limit the information to a need to know basis; if the arrangement is required to be disclosed, the parties should make an effort to see to it that regulatory authority concerned is kept under wraps.

In case word leaks out about the "secret understanding" or its disclosure is not handled properly, the rest of the stockholders may feel threatened and opt to bind together to counteract the takeover of the parties to the agreement.

Regardless of the means used, whether legally permissible or morally questionable, to gain or maintain control over a corporation, everything boils down to what the law allows.

All stockholders have the same objective: to profit from their investment. They will cast their vote in favor of or support any stockholder who they think would be in the best position to accomplish that goal.

(For feedback, please write to tpolabfeed@inquirer.com.ph)

URC '07-'08 profit down 94%

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE CONSUMER CONGLOMERATE Robina Corp. (URC) yesterday reported a 94-percent drop in its consolidated net income for fiscal year ending September 2008 due to mark-to-market losses from bond holdings.

In a statement, URC reported a net profit of P341 million during the fiscal year versus the P5.35 billion in the previous year. Year-ago earnings were shored up by nonrecurring gains from the sale of its shares in Robinsons Land Corp.

Its core earnings before tax in 2008 rose by 7.9 percent to P13 billion over a year ago.

"Looking forward, URC will be tightening its belt, as the current global market crisis makes access to credit more expensive," the company said. "URC will rationalize its capital expenditure for fiscal 2009, and will reduce working capital in order to be a leaner and more efficient organization."

"Despite the challenges, we expect sales and operating income to grow in the high single digits in pesos in the first two operating months and as our international operations achieve profitability," it said.

The company took a hit of P2.26 billion in market valuation loss on financial instruments in 2008, a reversal of the P452 million valuation gain a year ago.

"This was due to the drop in market values of both bonds/treasuries and equity securities as a result of the global financial crisis," it said in a report to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Consolidated net sales and services grew by 20.3 percent to P95.45 billion from a year ago, fueled by the 21.5-percent rise in earnings posted by the branded consumer foods segment.

"This increase was due mainly to the 19.1 percent increase in sales of URC's dairies, its operations," it said.

Snack foods division posted a 22.7-percent growth in earnings, while beverages grew by 6.4 percent.

Net sales of its international operations rose by 42.7 percent to $2.0 billion, in pesos terms, this translated to a 38.9-percent growth.

Shareholders OK amendments to FPHC by-laws

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

A MAJORITY OF THE SHAREHOLDERS OF First Philippine Holdings Corp. (FPHC) approved the proposed amendments to its by-laws to prevent hostile parties from getting into its board.

These shareholders represent about 57 percent of the company.

FPHC president Elpidio Ibanez said aside from FPHC parent firm Sarmiento Holdings Corp., which owns 43 percent of the company, a number of foreign institutional investors holding proxy votes approved the changes.

He said these institutional investors represented some 14 percent of the company.

"Based on the current economic environment, there is a need to further protect shareholder interests and not to lose sight of our business mission," Ibanez said.

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), which holds about 2 percent of FPHC, was the only group that opposed the planned amendments, he said.

Some shareholders representing 1.4 million shares or less than 1 percent of the company voted against an amendment that [illegible]

Republic of the Philippines
National Food Authority
Central Luzon Regional Office
Cabanatuan City

January 15, 2009

ERRATUM

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid for Procurement of 2009 Trucking Services

Please be informed that 1 (one) corner column (second publication on the Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid for the Procurement of 2009 Trucking Services published in Philippine Daily Inquirer on January 15, 2009 written as "Isaac Port Region III Province" is hereby corrected and should be read as "Subic Port Region III Province".

(Sgd.) EDILBERTO A. ALEJANDRO
REAC - Chairman

US bank crisis deepens; ECB rate cut expected

Citigroup to reorganize; BA seeks funds

FRANKFURT/TOKYO—BANK OF AMERICA and Citigroup based their restructured investment questioned if they had the capital strength to cope with a global crisis that is set to push the European Central Bank (ECB) to cut rates later on Thursday.

Data across the developed world pointing to a deepening recession and fears that more public money in the United States may be needed to keep banks afloat weighed on financial markets.

Shares in Bank of America and Citigroup, one of America's biggest banks, fell as they faced a fresh crisis of confidence over whether they have enough capital to cover bruising lending losses from toxic assets and the crippling global economy.

"The large banks in the US are not lending, and they're desperate to conserve capital," said Eric Sprott at Westwood Capital in New York. "Banks only remain going concerns because the federal government is topping up their equity."

The financial crisis began in credit markets in 2007, when bank lending dried up in the face huge losses in the US housing market. The global economy has deteriorated relentlessly since, pushing the biggest developed economies into recession and raising alarm bells over rising job losses.

Citigroup, whose shares dived 23 percent on Wednesday, plans to report quarterly results six days ahead of schedule on Friday and analysts are looking for a fifth straight multi-billion-dollar loss.

The bank was also widely expected to provide details of a reorganization of the company designed to ensure its survival.

Bank of America is close to meeting billions of dollars of support from the US government, a source familiar with the matter said, as it tries to digest Merrill Lynch & Co. Inc, the investment bank and brokerage it bought on Jan 1.

Merrill has billions in troubled assets—ranging from commercial real estate to subprime mortgages—that weighed during a brutal fourth quarter.

Citigroup has already been propped up with $45 billion in government funds from the Troubled Asset Relief Program, while Bank of America and Merrill are owed $25 billion.

"Won't think the worst are banks is halted in, but there's still a lot of headwind," said Rich Parkin, head of trading at Standard Group in New York, after Citigroup shares fell below $3 for the first time since a government rescue in November.

And there is no relief in sight, warned Jamie Dimon, chief executive of giant JP Morgan Chase & Co.

"The second act of the economic situation is not yet behind us. It looks as if it will continue to deteriorate for most of 2009," he told the Financial Times.

Euro zone policymakers have been slower than their counterparts in the United States, Japan and Britain to slash interest rates in the face of the economic storm.

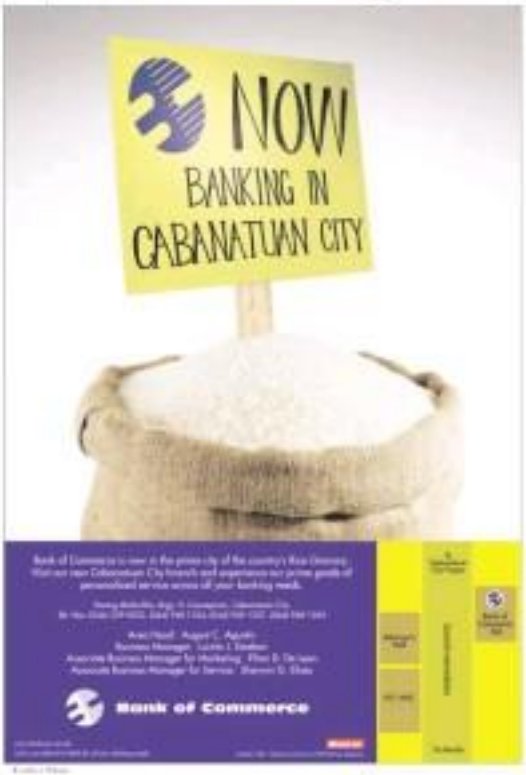
But news the German economy contracted sharply in last year's final quarter and euro zone industrial output plunged in November boosted expectations it will make a big cut.

The euro's benchmark, 2.5 percent, is relatively low in the decade-long history of the ECB, and pales alongside near-zero borrowing costs in the United States and Japan.

European bond markets were upended on Wednesday when Standard & Poor's cut its credit rating on Greek sovereign debt, sticking fears downgrades to other members of the 16-country eurozone could follow.

Meanwhile said on Wednesday it was shedding 4,000 jobs, on top of cuts last year from the embattled search company Google Inc. said it was laying off 100 full-time employees.

Companies continued to huddle in the crisis zon. Canada's Nortel Networks Corp. North America's biggest telephone equipment maker, filed for bankruptcy. REUTERS



Apple CEO Jobs backtracks on health, takes leave

SEATTLE—ENDS AS APPLE INC. SOMEWHAT hedges that all is not well, the extent of Steve Jobs' health problems remains a closely guarded secret.

The Apple chief executive, a cancer survivor, said Wednesday he is taking medical leave until June, a move that said the company's shares plunging 7 percent.

Apple's chief operating officer, Tim Cook, will take over Jobs' responsibilities while he is on leave, though Jobs said he plans to remain involved in major strategic decisions.

The announcement marks a reversal from just a week ago, when Jobs, 53, tried to assure investors and employees his recent weight loss was caused by an easily treatable hormone deficiency.

"The reason has been a mystery to me and my doctors," Jobs said in a statement last week. Once tests revealed the problem, Jobs said he began a "relatively simple and straightforward" treatment and "I still expect to remain at Apple's helm.

But investors weren't reassured. Size do Jobs' medical issues seem to be quite complex.

"Unfortunately, the certainty over my personal health continues to be a distraction not only for me and my family, but everyone else at Apple as well," Jobs wrote in an e-mail to employees Wednesday. "In addition, during the past week I have learned that my health-related issues are more complicated I originally thought."

Apple's shares have surged and tumbled over the last year in step with rumors or news about the CEO's health and his gaunt appearance. While the top executive's health is an issue for investors to any company as Apple the level of concern reaches fever pitch because Jobs has a hand in everything from ideas for new products to the way they're marketed.

Jobs cofounded Apple with Steve Wozniak in 1976, at the dawn of the personal computer revolution. He was ousted from the company in 1985 but returned as CEO in 1997, shaking unprofitable product lines and helping rescue the company from financial ruin.

Since then, under Jobs' demanding leadership, Apple has churned out a string of sleek gadgets, from the iMac and the iPod to a new line of aluminum-covered MacBooks and the coveted iPhone. Many investors fear that without Jobs, Apple would not be able to sustain its growth or its high-end minimalist style.

Apple's shares (AAPL) 1.1 percent, to $79.38 in extended trading after Jobs announced his leave. That left the shares more than 52-week low, well off the high of $192.24 reached over the past year. AP

Asian stocks tumble as optimism fades

TOKYO—ASIAN STOCKS PLUNGED YESterday, with Tokyo dropping almost 8 percent to a six-month low, following another deluge of grim economic and corporate news.

A record fall in Japanese machinery orders provided a stark illustration of the fallout of the US-born credit crunch for Asia's economies.

Tokyo slumped 4.91 percent, finishing at the lowest level since Dec. 5. Seoul dropped 6.0 percent and Sydney shed 4.2 percent. Hong Kong was down 5.4 percent by noon.

"We haven't had a worse day in the market so far this year," said Michael Shelbourne, a strategist at Intersoft Securities in Melbourne.

Sentiment was dented by news that Japan's core machinery orders, a closely watched barometer of corporate capital spending, plunged by 15.3 percent in November from the previous month, the fastest drop on record.

"Machinery orders data turned out to be much weaker than expected, fueling the investor to sell," said HSBC Friend Securities strategist Hideaki Higashi.

Market optimism at the start of the year over president-elect Barack Obama's plans to jump-start the flagging US economy have now been eclipsed by fears of corporate bankruptcies and weak earnings due to the economic crisis.

"Any of the New Year optimism has been brushed away this week," Jeremy Hook, a client adviser at TMS Capital in Sydney, told Dow Jones Newswires.

Australia's unemployment rose to 4.5 percent in December, the highest level in almost two years.

Nissan Motor Co. shares lost 3.4 percent after a local newspaper reported Japan's third largest automaker expects to post an annual operating loss because of weak sales and a stronger yen.

A fresh wave of selling hit US and European stock markets Wednesday on an unrelenting flow of bad economic and corporate news sparked fears of a deepening global downturn.

Wall Street's Dow Jones Industrial Average slid 2.95 percent Wednesday, extending a losing streak to a sixth session.

"The equity risk premium remains high across markets as investors' assets e current mood to massive fundamentals," Pro- macro strategist Sean Darby said. AFP

Power plant construction in Subic deferred

Move due to expected slowdown in demand for power

Aboitiz Power to offer ₱2-₱3B in debt notes

By Doris C. Dorian

ABOITIZ POWER CORP. WILL RAISE THE domestic bond market for the first time this year with the offering of P2 billion to P3 billion worth of five-year debt notes to finance its expansion.

Erramon Aboitiz, newly installed CEO of APC's parent conglomerate Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc., yesterday told reporters that the proceeds of the bond issuance would be used to finance new acquisitions and "greenfield" or clean energy projects.

Aboitiz said the company is not seeking credit rating from Philippine by the peso-denominated debt issuance.

He said APC was now assessing market conditions and finalize the deal existing "within the next couple of weeks." He said the size of the offering had yet to be finalized but the company's requirements was estimated at P2 billion to P3 billion.

"It depends on the market appetite," he said.

Only last month, the company sold P1.19 billion worth of debt notes for its expansion this year.

He said APC would still work with BDO Capital and Investment Corp., BPI Capital Corp., First Metro Investment Corp., and the Manila branch of ING Bank NV for the additional fund-raising. These banks were lead managers of the issuance in December.

APC is a leader in the hydroelectric power generation industry and has interests in some of the largest privately owned distribution utilities in the country.

Since its incorporation in 1998, APC has acquired interests in both hydroelectric power generation facilities and in thermal plants.

Aboitiz said the companies under AEV would access their commercial financing requirements this year from the local market, to avoid risks posed by the lingering global financial turbulence.

By Abigail L. Ho

WITH POWER DEMAND EXPECTED to slow, Redondo Peninsula Energy Inc., a joint venture between Aboitiz Power Corp. and Taiwan Cogen International Corp., has suspended the construction of a 300-megawatt (MW) coal-fired power plant in Subic Freeport.

Aboitiz Power president and chief executive Erramon Aboitiz said the project was still subject to review at this point.

"We have pushed back our review to proceed. We decided to hold off and review it for the second quarter. We were hoping to start construction in the first quarter of the year," he said in a briefing yesterday.

The joint venture, he said, would review the cost of the project, as well as determine how demand in the Luzon grid would turn out, amid the expected adverse effects of the global financial crisis.

Right now, he said the plant was estimated to cost between $450 million and $460 million.

"We will look at costing again because costs have come down. We will also review the demand in the Luzon grid. If growth is negative, we will probably think of delaying the project further," he said.

Redondo Peninsula has already awarded to Formosa Heavy Industries the contract for the supply of the boiler, steam turbine, generator and related services to be used in the construction of the power plant.

In the meantime, Aboitiz Power executive vice president Luis Miguel Aboitiz said in an earlier interview that the company would be bidding for the 732.5-MW Pollocapines geothermal power plant, which Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) would be auctioning off this year.

He said the company was also eyeing some independent power producer administrator contracts that PSALM would be bidding out next month.

ENERGY Secretary Angelo Reyes (left) receives a giant facsimile check from National Grid Corporation of the Philippines president and CEO Walter Brown (far right) representing the firm's 25-percent share payment for the right to operate and manage National Transmission Corp.-Thanced. With them are Transco president Arthur Aguilar, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves and PNOCP chair Dy Zingang. The ceremonial check turnover was made during the signing of the deed of transfer between PSALM-Transco and NGCP which officially assigned to NGCP the right to operate and manage the transmission system in the next 25 years.

Former rural bank chief vows to tell all

By Daniel L. Lucas

THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF the shuttered Rural Bank of Sabangalidan claimed the so-called "fictitious" loans that had been blamed for its collapse were completely above board.

Her statements came after it was revealed that the Cebu-based rural bank owned by the Gaisano family held P1.2 billion in loans—85 percent of its P1.4-billion worth of assets—that were allegedly released to circumvention of normal procedures.

In an e-mail to the Inquirer, Pat U. Rachea said "all loan transactions had the knowledge and approval of the board."

Rachea, who was last year's head of the Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines (RBAP), is the wife of the incumbent mayor of Lapu-Lapu City.

She said she was ready to divulge more details about the bank's operations.

"Tell the proper fora, I will provide the public and the regulators with the copy of my resignation letter addressed to the board of directors of (the bank) so that the truth will come out," she said.

Rachea added she would insist a "more in depth statement" to the media so the public and the regulators could have a clearer picture on what had happened to the rural bank "in the proper time."

Last week, authorities ordered the closure of the Rural Bank of Sabangalidan after it was unable to meet the reduction of withdrawals at the hands of clients made given by the closure of banks linked to the Legaspi Group.

The discovery of the allegedly fictitious loans caused the bank to become not only illiquid but also insolvent. This prompted the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to order it to stop operations, placing it under receivership with Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. (PDIC).

Bank chair Peter S. Gaisano said at least three of the bank's branches in the Visayas were located close to branches of Legaspi Group rural banks. The physical proximity caused Sabangalidan's clients to withdraw their funds from the bank, as well, he explained.

Gaisano said, however, that the family—which is mainly engaged in the business of retailing—was in the process of finding an investor that could help raise the bank's capitalization within the 90-day period allowed by PDIC.

The bank has been facing problems involving its clients since mid-December, arising unfathomable only intermittently since then. It declared a voluntary bank holiday on Jan. 5, 2009.

The BSP tried to extend financial assistance to the bank, opening a P500-million emergency loan facility for it, on the condition that it could present collateral that was acceptable to the monetary authority.

The bank was only to come up, however, with only P10 million worth of acceptable collateral.

In her statement, Rachea said her resignation from the bank was not an isolated event since it was "immediately preceded by the resignation of the former chair, Francisco Gaisano," who was replaced by his brother, the current chair.

No need for financing now, Transco operator says

NATIONAL GRID CORPORATION OF THE Philippines, the new operator of the country's electricity superhighways, is not keen on tapping the debt market for the uncertainties of its $1-billion concession fee balance.

NGCP president and chief executive Nelson Hevaro said the consortium was right now relying on the 20-year debt-and-equity mix that Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. had earmarked to it.

"We are confident we can fund it out of cash flow or from our revenue stream. But we may resort to some short-term financing to bridge (some revenue gaps)," he said in a briefing yesterday.

He explained that the revenue that NGCP would be collecting now would still go to the government since these were for services rendered when National Transmission Corp. was still part of the public sector.

The short-term financing that the consortium planned to take out would be "nothing major" and would just serve to bridge the gap until revenues come in for NGCP from transmission grid operations.

As for the longer-term funding requirements of the group, particularly for payment of the concession fee balance, he said some of it would come from cash flow, while some would come from government itself through payment for capital expenditure commitments that had not been delivered upon turnover yesterday.

"There are projects that have either been started by Transco or have been programmed by Transco and have included in the bid documents as completed projects but had not even been started," he explained.

"So in order to comply with its commitment, the government had the choice of giving us the fund—the minimum amount we estimate is at least P7 billion or even more—which is being subject to a third party audit as of this time. The government can pay to cash, which it did not want to do, so they will just deduct it from the payment we will make to the future," he added.

He said raise and keep room financing was out of the question at this point.

"We see no immediate need to borrow long-term. I was asked earlier by some people whether we tapped resort to World Bank funds, but that would be a matter of cost. If funding from them will turn out to be cheaper than the cost of paying the government in accordance to the deferred payment scheme, then we will resort to that," Abigail L. Ho

Shareholders . . .

From page B1

extended the number of days for proxy validation from three to five.

There were 58.77 percent of shares represented by proxies and by proxy in yesterday's meeting.

Aside from the lengthening of the period for proxy validation, shareholders also approved additional disqualification provisions for the selection of directors.

Under the amendment, any stockholder may be nominated and elected director provided the person is not engaged in any business or activity that competes with or is antagonistic to the corporation or any of its subsidiaries and affiliates.

No person will qualify or be eligible for nomination as a director if there is a finding or a final and non-appealable judgement against him by the Securities and Exchange Commission or a court or other administrative body of competent jurisdiction.

The person is disqualified if he or she is judicially declared insolvent and if there is a finding against the person by final judgement by a foreign court or equivalent regulatory authority, or by self-regulatory organization.

The person is likewise disqualified if he or she previously committed unlawful acts deemed inimical or prejudicial to the reputation and interest of PPEC or its subsidiaries or affiliates.

"The amendments are there to strengthen governance at the board level and prevent persons from entering the board who may destroy the value for the company," said PPEC vice president Benjamin Lopez said.

PSE: Meralco may soon resume trade

By Dova C. Dundao

THE PHILIPPINE STOCK EXchange is standing to lift the suspension in the trading of Manila Electric Co. shares, having segregated the shares that are now the subject of an ongoing spinoff-related dispute.

PSE president Francis Lim yesterday said reports that the PSE board had instructed management to work with Meralco and the Philippine Depository and Trust Co. to remove the trading of shares that had no bearing on the dispute between the state-owned Land Bank of the Philippines and an agrarian claimant.

Lim said the bourse could no longer do anything about the 3.4 million shares that already changed hands before the Meralco suspension.

Still, the bourse is considering its options on how to deal with the estimated 2.35 million Meralco shares that had been measured but not yet settled.

But to principle, the PSE would like the trading of the rest of the shares resume.

"It's like water cannot vanish all," Lim said. "You have to purify it before letting the public drink it."

The PSE suspended the trading of Meralco shares about a month ago due to a legal snafu between the Lopez-led Meralco power retailer and realty unit Rockwell Landbank.

Landbank alleged that Meralco had illegally canceled its shares on the eve of a governance deadline jointly set to block of stock to Global 5000 investment.

The disputed Meralco shares are equivalent to about 3.4 percent of Meralco's total issues. But the shares comprise a substantial portion of the 10-percent block that government financial institutions have agreed to sell to Global 5000 Investment, a local investment fund led by businessman Inigo Zobel, former Trade Minister Roberto S. Ongpin and conglomerate king Jaime Augusto Zobel.

The suspension in the trading of shares was meant to shield investors from risks arising from the legal contest between Landbank and Meralco.

GSIS renews FTI property bid

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE System has reiterated its intention to buy the government's 800-hectare property in Taguig City, courting doubt on privatization officials' claim that there are many potential investors from the private sector interested in the asset.

Winston Garcia, GSIS president and general manager, questioned the apparent reluctance of the Department of Finance to entertain the government pension fund's P8.5-billion offer to buy the asset.

The GSIS wants to sell the property for at least P10 billion.

But Garcia said it would be difficult, if not impossible, to dispose of the property for P18 billion.

The government, which owns the property through the state-owned Bank Development Inc., is still honoring many existing lease contracts held by tenants, he added.

"[The DOF] said there are many investors, such as the Ayalas, interested in the property," Garcia said. "But why haven't they sold it yet?"

PE, originally built to serve as a food processing and consolidation center for agricultural products, now plays host to more than 300 small- and medium-sized companies engaged in various businesses, including garments and electronics manufacturing.

According to Garcia, most private sector companies normally will not wait for so long to save from their investments worth billions of pesos.

Only the GSIS, he said, would be willing to spend as much on an investment whose yields would only be realized over the long term, he added.

"GSIS is a long-term investor," Garcia said. "I don't think anybody else could match our offer."

When asked what the pension fund has in mind for the property, Garcia said the GSIS would simply hold on to the asset and sell it for a profit after several years.

Earlier, Garcia said the GSIS expected to generate a 400-percent return from its investing in the property.

Garcia also said the GSIS could form a joint venture with a developer to turn the property into a commercial area.

Investing in land is more profitable than placing funds in government securities, Garcia said. Although the GSIS has treasury bonds and other securities in its investment portfolio, it also wants to diversify, Garcia said.

The government has again included the property on the list of assets to be sold this year, after failing to sell it in the past.

As in previous years, the government is hoping to generate revenues from the privatization of government assets this year to help plug the budget deficit.

In 2009, the government aims to generate P80 billion from privatization. Another government asset on the auction block is the property where the Philippine Embassy in Japan now stands.

Qatar, RP seal bilateral flight accord

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lucas

PHILIPPINE AND QATAR AIR TRANSPORT authorities have reached a bilateral accord allowing additional flights and cargo capacity for both countries.

Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) executive director Carmelo Arcilla confirmed in a telephone interview the other day that Philippine and Qatari air authorities have signed an agreement.

The air talks were held at the CAB headquarters in the old Manila International Airport in Pasay City.

Under the agreement, flights between Manila and Doha, Qatar's capital, will be lifted to eight flights a week from the present five per week.

Flights between Cebu and Doha will also be increased to 14 a week from the current three per week.

Likewise, weekly flights between Clark and Doha will now total 14 from the present seven a week, Arcilla said.

Additional "fifth freedom traffic rights," or rights that would permit carriers of both countries to go to a third country were also granted.

Under the accord, Qatari carriers are allowed to pass by Clark en route to countries from Doha. Qatari airlines will also be allowed to fly to Clark and pass by Singapore to pick up and unload passengers here/Doha.

Under those additional freedom traffic rights, Philippine carriers will be allowed to pass through Qatar en route to the United Kingdom.

Additional cargo capacity for cargo aircraft was also approved. This would allow carriers flying from Manila to Doha to carry as much as 200 tons a week. Previously, there was no prescribed tonnage.

Cargo aircraft flying between Clark and Doha can carry up to 400 tons a week from the current 200 tons per week.

"This is a milestone toward improving relations with Qatar and addressing the present and future needs of air services as well as trade and tourism," Arcilla said.

Bank lending continues ...

From page B1

remain elevated.

Economic managers said aggressive lending by banks would encourage investments and consumption, and thus offset the ill effects of risk aversion among investors and dampened consumption.

Also, lending for personal consumption purposes grew at a double-digit pace. Outstanding consumption loans stood at P143.75 billion, up 20.6 percent year-on-year. Michelle F. Sena

Trade officials slash registration fees by half

By Abigail L. Ho

TO HELP ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENeurship among Filipinos, the Department of Trade and Industry has slashed its business name registration fees by half.

According to Department Administrative Order 09-01 Series of 2009, or the Temporary Reduction of Business Name Registration Fees, charges for applications for new business names and renewal of existing business names would now be just P150 from the original P300.

The move, Trade Secretary Peter Favila said, was meant to promote the establishment of new enterprises and, in turn, help in the creation of new jobs.

He said displaced overseas Filipino workers would likely benefit from the new order, as lower registration fees would encourage them to use entrepreneurship as a viable career option.

"It's time to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset and move to further assist micro, small and medium enterprises in expanding their businesses," he said in a statement.

Trade Assistant Secretary Angel Peñaco Ty said interested applicants should register or renew their business names as soon as possible as the lower registration fees would only be offered for six months.

Metro Manila registrants can go to any DTI Regional Capital Region office, including those at Bch 76 Kids Lawton in Manila, Highway 54 Plaza in Shaw, Balintawak, Quezon City, Robinsons Galleria and Trinidad Plaza in Makati.

Registrants outside NCR can visit DTI's regional or provincial offices in the their applications.

Applications can also be filed online via www.bnrs.dti.gov.ph.

Apart from temporarily reducing registration fees, Favila said the DTI would also be providing livelihood assistance to Filipinos who would be rendered jobless because of the global financial crisis.

SEC readies measures to help ailing pre-need industry

By Dova C. Dundao

THE SECURITIES AND Exchange Commission is drafting a package of measures to provide breathing room to the battered pre-need industry given a tough global financial environment.

In a letter dated Dec. 22, 2008 to the Philippine Federation of Pre-Need Plan Companies Inc., SEC acting director Jose Aquino said the corporate regulator was "inclined to" give some leeway to mobilize your capital and trust fund buildup requirements on pre-need plans as proposed by the industry.

Based on Aquino's letter, the pre-need companies would be given until Feb. 15 this year to apply for such a program for those sellers of educational, pension and memorial plans must also immediately address trust fund deficiencies and capital impairment within 60 days.

There were also certain conditions that must be met by pre-need companies, including the following:

+ They must submit a letter acknowledging the trust fund deficiency/capital impairment, including an undertaking that should the financial conditions of the pre-need company improve during the implementation period, the pre-need company may be required to shorten said allowance period.

+ The pre-need company must submit a five-year financial outlook together with the assumptions taken.

+ They must submit a 15-year financial program to address the banks of old plans that are deemed to be commercially unpatentable, taking into consideration the respective maturity of the plans.

Aquino also disclosed a temporary relief during the building period by allowing more investments in real estate, unlisted shares of stock, as well as plan-holder loans.

Based on the proposal, investments in real estate may exceed the prescribed 15 percent of the total trust fund equity provided that the additional real estate properties are income-generating. They may also invest in unlisted shares but it they sell pre-need life plans.

Also, investments in unlisted shares will be allowed so long as the issuers are financially stable, solvent and have positive track records of growth.

Remittances ...

From page B1

The government estimates remittances sent through them (informal channels at about 5 percent of total).

Analysts said remittances registered a decent growth in November as OFWs tried to meet the growing expenditure requirements of their families ahead of the holidays.

For the entire 2008, the BSP projected that remittances could reach an annual growth of 15 percent.

Monetary officials said, however, that growth in remittances could slow down this year as a result of the economic crunch in the United States and Europe, which serve as home to many OFWs.

The BSP expects remittances to grow between 6 and 9 percent this year.

The BSP said the biggest source of remittances in January to November were the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Italy, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong.

The number of additional Filipinos deployed to work abroad in the first 11 months had reached 1.22 million, up 24.4 percent from 981,286 in the same month last year.

Analysts said the Philippine economy might be headed for a stark slowdown this year, predicting that remittances would drop as a result of job layoffs in the United States and Europe.

Shares close ...

From page B1

"It's clear that portfolio realignment is still ongoing," James Lago of PCCI Securities Brokers told Bow Jones Newswires. "Everybody is still fazed with bad economic numbers."

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. led the losers, dropping 0.9 percent to P2,105.

Conglomerate Ayala Corp. fell 3.9 percent to P323. AFP

BUSINESS

Business of agriculture is also business

COMMENTARY

By Brenda M. Dedoloy

IT IS SAID THAT THE BUSINESS OF business is business, while the business of government is governance. This is why it is recommended that government should keep out of business. Instead, it should provide the good governance needed to create the appropriate climate for business to make a decent profit.

Once government does business, it competes with the business sector often killing much of it because of government's unfair advantages. Furthermore, government often loses much of the taxpayers' money because government simply does not know how to do business.

What then is the business of agriculture? It is food production. It is food production. Others believe it is to provide jobs for our huge rural population. But if agriculture is not profitable, it cannot be sustainable. Food production and job creation cannot be achieved without agriculture returning a reasonable profit. Therefore, the business of agriculture must also be business.

P41.4-B DA budget

Possibly the best grouping of businessmen interested in agriculture is found in the Management Association of the Philippines-Agribusiness and Countryside Development Foundation (MAP-AGCDF) website: www.mapagricdf.com.ph). Its chair is Ramon Ilustre; its president, Victor Aquino.

Last Jan. 13, the topic covered in the MAP-AGCDF weekly forum was the budget of the Department of Agriculture (DA). The featured speaker was Joseph Estrada, President of the Center for National Budget Legislation. Among the MAP-AGCDF participants were those who spent part of their professional lives in government, such as former Science and Technology Secretary Celerina Feliscon, former Interior and Local Government Secretary Cesar Sarino, and former Ministry of Agriculture deputy Minister Manuel Lim.

Bicameral committee

On Monday, Congress will resume its session after a one-month break. On top of its agenda is the 2009 national budget. The bicameral committee of senators and congressmen will first do compromise budget proposals and submit them to Congress for final approval.

Expected to be discussed is Alyansa Agribuhayan's recommendation that the "Right of Information" provision be removed in the 2009 budget. It was included in 2007 but taken out in 2008. This provision allows the private sector to get information necessary to monitor the budget, especially that of the DA.

This year's P40.4-billion DA budget is 60 percent higher than last year's, for which Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap should be commended. But unless the "Right to Information" provision is restored by Congress and the appropriate monitoring mechanisms implemented by the DA, this larger budget might easily result in more corruption.

Role of business

This is where the agribusiness sector can come in. By monitoring the DA budget, this sector can not only guard against corruption, but also recommend how to make agriculture more profitable in a socially responsible way. This will help ensure that food production and rural job generation become sustainable.

If Congress approves the "Right to Information" provision, the remaining challenge will be for DA to implement the appropriate budget monitoring mechanisms, which will allow the agribusiness sector to perform its critical role.

On September 25 last year, Secretary Arthur Yap was saved to the Alyansa that he will have the legally mandated National Agribusiness and Fisheries Council (http://vault.da.gov.ph/) perform its obligation to monitor the DA budget.

Agriculture, fisheries council

Though there is only a 17-percent increase in the NAFC budget compared to the 72 percent and 68 percent increase in the AFMA and next DA budgets, respectively, the nine P55.4-million NAFC budget provides more than enough funds to perform the monitoring function in 2009.

Given this information, the MAP-AGCDF members voted unanimously last Tuesday to recommend that Agriculture Secretary Yap allow the MAP-AGCDF to be a member of the NAFC. It can be the most important addition to the NAFC, assuming two other prospective members are likewise accepted.

These are the Alyansa Agribuhayan, the largest people organization (PO) coalition of farmers and fisherfolk; and CODE-NGO, the largest non-government organization (NGO) committed to help POs.

With the significantly increased DA budget used properly, it is hoped that these three prospective NAFC members will help ensure that the business of agriculture will also be profitable and socially responsible in 2009.

The author is chair of Agrinetik, former secretary for presidential flagship programs and projects, and former undersecretary for Agriculture and Trade and Industry for inquiries and suggestions, email agrinetikphil@yahoo.com or mobile 0915-9551122

Developers cast eye on Burnham Park

Offers up to convert it into theme park

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—FIVE INVESTORS, INCLUDING the owners of Enchanted Kingdom, have expressed plans to convert the 100-year-old Burnham Park into a theme park.

Anthony de Leon, SEC manager and chair of the Baguio Tourism Council, said he had been pushing to city officials a proposal to lease out Burnham Park to developers, who can turn it into a theme park.

He, however, declined to identify the four other investors willing to invest in the improvement of Burnham Park.

Dr. Leon said it was time to move Baguio into the 21st century because tourists are tired of visiting old city destinations such as the Mines View Park.

Once a park that showcased a vista of the century-old mines in neighboring Benguet, Mines View Park is now a composite strip mall where pasa and tenol sculptures are sold.

The idea to convert the park, however, has offended residents fighting to conserve and restore the park to the state envisioned by its creator, Daniel Burnham.

Mayor Bernardo Bautista is has reinstituted the park to the Department of Trade and Industry as the city's official one-town-one-product (Otop).

A P30-million outlay and another P320-million share from the national treasury are being processed to restore Burnham Park, he said recently.

"The park has always represented the 'powerful blueprint for the organization of space within Baguio City,' according to Robert Reed in his book, "The City of Pines: The Origins of Baguio as a Colonial Hill Station and Regional Capital."

Baguio was designed by Burnham, for whom the park was named.

Reed cited architect Inverz to point out that Burnham took pains to preserve the core of the valley-long elliptical the 'lords of old flagview (the area's Baliet name') into a central park that mirrored the parks of Washington D.C. and Chicago.

"Burnham strongly recommended the establishment of at least two major public parks and further suggested that 'large portions of surrounding hills [be] maintained as informal parks, in order that their existing of green may be carefully preserved,'" Reed wrote.

He said Burnham "opposed dense settlement in the Baguio hills and advocated strict laws designed to preserve the high quality of the Baguio environment."

Jean Nadab, Cordillera director of the National Economic and Development Authority, said the theme park proposal should be offered instead to the resting town of Baguio in Benguet.

Nadab cited a 1984 urban development plan designed by a combined team of European and American urban planners after the July 1990 earthquake, to shape a metropolitan Baguio composed of the economic capital and four Benguet towns-La Trinidad, Itogon, Sablan and Tuba.

To preserve Baguio's dwindling resources, the planners urged government to farm out investments to the four towns.

But De Leon said the option should be studied because it frees the city government from managing and spending on the upkeep of the century-old park.

He said he is pitched the proposal to restore Burnham Park because he was dissatisfied with the way the city government had been administering the park.

BUSINESS Friday
E-mail: business@inquirer.com.ph
WWW: www.inquirer.net/business
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SCENE AND NOTED

Brands, ads to kick off 2009

By Regie Yu
Contributor

ZARA METRO MANILA WIDE side: Don't judge a store by the number of people inside it. Judge it by the number of people lining up to one, as in the case of this global Spanish brand.

Judging from the long queues when all its branches reopened on the second day of the New Year, you'd think Manila hasn't heard anything about a looming global recession. When people line shopping it off, or saving the best for last?

Brand value

Whatever it is, the brand must be taking it to heart in its ongoing sale, what with the huge turnout of shoppers living up to the cashier to pay for their goodies.

"Come hell or stampede, people will always line up for any good brand," goes a mother-to-Manila's chi-chi crowd, memorized during swollen varicose veins caused by the long line.

Sky Cable "It Changes You" TVC demise: When commercials do not try too hard to be noticed using gimmickry and sparkle effects, mind you, they get noticed. Take this tale, for example, of a driver (one of two versions) who goes to town and has his delivery run jarred with scenes by mischievous tykes every time he drives past a particular place.

The spot is able to tell a story even without its annoyance preceding your ears. The motif is best used as it gives you a front seat view of the plot without being spoon-fed with obtrusive copy lines.

Sky Cable and Sky Broadband have been running TV ads lately that are worth watching on commercial breaks—like this one, at 5 bars.

Real Mobility "Strange Invitee" TVC: Because this doesn't belong to the genre of ads with:

1. Simulated pubescent infants forever growling and screaming on camera. 2. Unnatural sounding lahuri recording manufacturers' words. 3. Distorted perspective of hands holding mobile phones in print ads, this commercial attracts attention.

The series holds you spellbound, especially when lead characters zoom on nonchalant by merely "sorta recording" voices other than ours. Bravo.

That is until we stumbled across an award-winning campaign from Europe's most extensive awards show, Epica 2008.

Reuben—yes, it is an ad agency—a Leo Burnett affiliate in Oslo, Norway, had adopted a similar commercial approach, coincidentally, also for a telecom brand named Telenor.

Called "Strange Voices," it features a rogue gang leader with a squeaky voice of a 7-year-old girl, an angelic-looking beauty who plans to join a choir but with a voice of a cunning frog; a party favor who speaks like your 90-year-old grandpa.

What to do? Let trucking do the talking. The campaign's positioning and promise is straightforward: For heavy SMS users.

While they're "voice-savvy, but different"—in the literal sense would say—people couldn't help but notice, more so because they're in the same product category, and one of them is visible on the Net: 3.5 Stars.

Smart thing

Smart 50 million subscribers: Up 18 percent from last year, Smart Bloom banked on low-cost service offers to customers and developed innovations based on usage patterns of subscribers. When a brand does that, it's a smart thing and the result is simply amazing.

There the evidence almost half the country's total population, a phenomenal growth for a once sinking brand that has become the country's undisputed GSM cellular digital telecom leader.

No wonder "Bite Na Me" was such a howling success, no matter how "jologs" you may see it. One classic example of "if you don't connect to your consumers, you're definitely out of it."

Now that Smart has the Ky-

(MARCH 30)

EXCELLENT job for TBWA-GHP: Casting Barack Obama lookalike in the Mocha 'Impasto' TV commercial.

'Come hell or stampede, people will always line up for any good brand'

ZARA's New Year 2009 Sale—a big hit all over Metro Manila.

With BPI Family Savings Bank, there's no need to put your dream homes on hold through good times or bad.

Build your Dreams

Through the years, our expertise has continually prevailed. That's why you can count on us to continue offering low interest rates, fast turn-around time, ease of application and payment, and expertise in consumer financing.

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People, Events & Products

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Editor Arlen Rigkeroes

Poor children benefit from sale of premium ham

POOR, UNDERNOURISHED CHILDREN, who could only wish of Christmas dinner complete with ham and other delectable specialties, are now benefiting from the sales of a premium meat holiday ham produced by the country's most outstanding Christmas ham company.

One of these children, Marianne Joy Ribon, a four-year-old toddler from Brgy. Bagbaguin, Bulacan City City celebrated Christmas as a healthy kid, after undertaking a supplemental feeding program that started last September.

Marianne Joy is just one of the 3,000 beneficiaries of the Galaxy Bebot feeding program administered by Odyssey Foundation Inc and supported by United Laboratories Inc.

Beneficiaries of the project are the supplemental feeding program were given nutritious food in the feeding site each day during a 60-day period. Aside from solid food, they received vitamin supplements courtesy of United Laboratories.

Odyssey Foundation, the corporate social responsibility arm of food processing firm and Chocnut Inc, launched the program four years ago in its quest to eliminate child malnutrition in the country.

The program drew solid support from CDO, which for the fourth year in a row in 2008, is donating a portion of proceeds from the sales of its flagship Christmas ham - the CDO Holiday Whole Meat Ham.

Millions of pesos have already been set aside for the nutrition program that has benefited over 7,000 previously undernourished children in five provincial areas of Metro Manila, Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon.

Under this year's campaign dubbed as "Ham for a Cause Part 4", CDO Foodsphere is again donating P5 for every box of CDO Holiday Whole Meat Ham sold in Metro Manila outpost stores from Dec. 1 to 31.

"We are happy to announce that the Ham for a Cause project does not only pave way for consumers to appreciate and enjoy our premium ham, but also for them to share their blessings by buying CDO Holiday Whole Meat Ham) with these poor and marginalized children," said Jerome Ong, president of CDO Foodsphere.

CDO Foodsphere Inc. acknowledged as the most outstanding manufacturer of Christmas ham for the second year in a row, offers CDO Holiday Whole meat Ham, which has become a household brand for high quality and superior taste.

The Consumer Union of the Philippines (CUP), the largest consumer group in the country, named CDO Foodsphere as the outstanding Christmas ham manufacturer in 2006 and 2007.

CDO Foodsphere said it has earned the distinction because it makes sure that all materials, ingredients, and processes follow internationally accepted standards in preparing the CDO Holiday Whole meat Ham.

CDO Holiday Whole meat Ham is a whole muscle ham that undergoes a ten-step process to achieve that genuine taste of ham. It is slowly smoked, then cooked, and decorated with special blends of herbs and glazed with pineapple jelly or bring out its luscious flavor. This curtesious process gives CDO Holiday Whole meat Ham that good look, lean meat, and savory taste.

Odyssey Foundation said it is committed to continue its supplemental feeding program to help reduce the incidence of hunger and malnutrition among Filipino children.

BEST PERFORMING GSED FOR 2008

Metrobank Bank and Trust Company (Metrobank) was conferred the overall Best Performing Government Securities Eligible Dealer (GSED) for 2008 by the Bureau of the Treasury. The award is given to the top two best performing banks on the basis of several criteria that include volumes of government securities transactions through auction winnings, trading in the secondary market, and customer sales. Metrobank has been consistently recognized for its outstanding performance in both the primary and secondary markets. Metrobank executive committee vice president Rosario Bautista-Lagunzad (left) and senior vice president Wilhelmina Ngochua (right) received the award from national treasurer Roberto Tan (second from left) and Department of Finance Secretary Margarito Teves.

AMA Philippine team wins 5th place in Cisco competition

DEMONSTRATING THE POWERFUL collaborative capabilities of the network, Cisco mounted its first-ever regional networking skills competition, Asia Pacific SkoBuzz 2008, over Cisco TelePresence and Cisco Webex. The competition featured 48 participants representing 13 countries in the Asia Pacific region challenging each other for the grand prize of an all-expense paid trip to the United States for the winning team. The Philippines was represented by four students from AMA College, Fast Road and won 7th place, beating 10 other countries that joined the competition. The AMA students were Vincent Floyd Benzing Dolino Gerald Galleros, Rustin Co and Lord Edrian Gamos.

China won the top prize with Malaysia, Singapore and Bangladesh capturing the 2nd, 3rd and 4th positions respectively. Other countries that sent representatives were Taiwan, Australia, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, New Zealand, India and Hongkong. In previous Cisco Skills Networking Competitions, ran-nin AMA teams have won the top award, beating other schools that offer CNA in the country as well as to the region.

Asia Pacific SkoBuzz is an annual competition held by the Cisco Networking Academy (CNA), a comprehensive e-learning program that enables students to develop valuable information and communications technology (ICT) skills for increased access to opportunities in the global economy. This is the first time, however, that the competition was done virtually were Cisco TelePresence and Cisco Webex. The competition tests the capability and skill levels of CNA students in the area of computer network design, configuring, configuring, troubleshooting, and other challenging tasks all of which are covered in the CNA program. The competition involves two levels of racing. The first level is multiple-choice online examinations and the second level requires hands-on troubleshooting with previously-used networks.

Now in the Philippines, AMA Education System (AMAES), Asia's pioneer and largest network of universities and colleges, is one of the first partners of Cisco Networking Academy. AMAES is also authorized to administer the exams for CNA certification in the Philippines. Today, AMAES also has the most number of schools offering Cisco networking programs recognized worldwide. To provide Cisco Skills Networking Competitions, the AMA teams have won the top award, beating other schools that offer CNA in the country as well as to the region.

Cisco is the worldwide leader in networking transforming the way people connect, communicate and collaborate. Today, its Cisco Networking Academy now is a 3-million population of around 800,000 students each year in more than 160 countries.

BEING HEALTHY IS A LIFESTYLE

Getting medical attention should not mean waiting in line for hours on your turn to see the doctor. This only brings unnecessary stress to patients and makes their visits uncomfortable than they already are. Providing the most efficient health care medical personal attention, providing convenient quality health care by installing an ultrasonic. This is exactly what patients can expect from the most trusted outpatient health care facility in the country, Philippine Medical Center — fast and complete health care that puts the patients' needs in the center of attention. Located beside Cubao, the location itself in Makati City, the outpatient clinic eliminates boring waiting time for the patients and their family. The convenient and accessible location plans its ever-growing number of clients the ease and comfort they deserve. Imagine this: While home is having fun room mashing to the beat or consulting the OB-gyne and dad is consulting the doctor on a golf swing, the children can also take the kids to the mall's playground in the activity center or enjoy bonding time by the whole family. Going beyond convenient and comfortable, the clinic provides 99% service for individuals who may need the internet connection to finish their work or just to spend some time and not wait for the doctor's appointment. What's more, the client's time is spent wisely by a drugstore (Mercury Drug sits one floor below Patient First) allows patients to purchase prescribed medicine right after consultation with the doctor. The first anniversary health

care center is a mall of first opened at SM Megamall in 1999 before moving its full operation to Sucat in Feb. 1 2001. Patient First has come a long way to providing patients with a one-stop medical center. The health services provider has continued to gather a staff of highly trained professionals totally dedicated in maintaining the highest quality and widest range of services that includes diagnostic services (x-ray, laboratory, ultrasound, etc), medical services (pre-employment and annual physical exams, immunization shots, emergency medicine, etc.) and dental services (basic and orthodontic, among many others. For more information, visit Patient First at 3/F Mercury Drug Bldg. Gil delos 3 in Bahani City (the store is open Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.) or call 840-2378.

THE SUN SHOP OPENS AT SM CAGAYAN DE ORO

SUN Global's retail arm, The SUN Shop recently opened at Level 3, SM De Oro, Cagayan De Oro. Cagayan de Oro City. The SUN Shop offers prepaid Wild Pitch and call cards, prepaid load, prepaid egames kiosk and bills payments. It also offers the SUN Rebel Kit, a business starter set for those who want to sell SUN Cellular's prepaid products and earn extra income by being a dealer. For more information on SUN Cellular's products, services and other businesses, please call 888-SUN-CELL (888-7865) or send an e-mail at infocenter@sunbelph.ph.

SAVE AND EARN THROUGH SMART'S VIP CLUB REWARDS

To date, Smart is hopeful to the largest individual owner of Smart's VIP Club. The Smart VIP Partner, Incentives, Privileges) Club is a program designed by the company to help loyal customers save money and earn points as they use their load. A VIP Club member earns points corresponding to his/her load subscriber purchases. These points can then be converted to cash. Smart VIP has recruited over 32,000 members since its launch began in October 2007. Club membership is free and registration forms are available at all Smartphone Smart Malls. From left: Bel Cruz, Smart marketing director; Laura Fugoso, Smart VIP associate; Marisela Rojas, Smart head Mona Pamaniman; Archie Bienaventuraz, Smart retail and card development manager.

FIRST NURSING REVIEW PROGRAM OF ITS KIND TO START IN RP

The launching for the CAN Review - Offering Review Program) for 24 qualified Philippine nurses was recently held at the Diamond Hotel, Manila. The event was to celebrate the achievement and other opportunities for Philippine nurses to work and live Australia. This program is the first of its kind to be delivered in the Philippines, with a pathway of entry into Australia after completing the Competence Assessment Service (CAS) Program. Apart from the clinical assessment, successful applicants will be monitored for Assessment Australia, the rest of the delivery will be completed in the Philippines. The 2008 Nursing, Training and Services (NTS) will travel throughout the province establishing training institutes in the main provincial areas to give all nurses equal opportunity to apply. The Philippines is the only country which is in offering existing-level graduate. This employment contract will give successful nurse's 2 years full time sponsored work within a hospital or aged care facility across Australia. After 2 years they will be eligible to apply for permanent residency (PR) in Australia. Shown are: (seated) Australian Embassy Senior Trade Commissioner (TCA Philippines) Mr Manuel Lee, president Alice Reichhorst; Tracy May, operations director (CAMTS) and Mario Anandan, director Healthcare.

'Legal and Labor Issues in Education Law' seminar

THE CENTER FOR GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES is holding a seminar entitled "Legal and Labor Issues in Education Law: Cases, Updates and Solutions" on Feb. 3 and 6, at the Peninsula Manila, Makati City.

This program is to address the unique and important concerns faced by school and university administrators and owners. Over the years, there is an alarming increase in legal and labor lawsuits in the school environment. Recognizing these challenging times, there is a need for schools and universities, whether private or public, to protect themselves by better understanding legal and labor issues pertaining to education law.

The HCLE-accredited seminar will be divided into two parts. The first part will cover legal issues facing schools and universities, recently, how schools can comply with existing government regulations to avoid liabilities; ways to align school policies to education laws; how to address and solve legal problems especially those involving labor issues. Additionally, participants will learn the important legal issues governing various aspects of branches and extension classes, student legal issues on admission and discipline, campus security and safety, and special laws governing educational institutions.

The second part will address labor issues specific to the education sector. Understanding different labor laws such as rules of payment of salaries, retention, computation of holiday and retirement pay, security of tenure, and other current issues will be very helpful and beneficial to those who are organizing CBA agreements and crafting labor contracts for teaching and non-teaching personnel.

Featured speaker for this event is lawyer Ulpiano P. Sandoval III who is one of the very few recognized authority in Education Law. He is the author of the book, "Education Law and the Private Schools" which is the most comprehensive book ever written on the subject matter.

School owners, administrators, officials, and legal practitioners would definitely learn and benefit from this pioneering seminar. The seminar is strictly limited to 40 pax and pre-registration is required. For more details and registration, log on to www.cgbp.org. You may also call 842-7340 and 59 or e-mail jessie@cgbp.org.

ProductFILES

Exotic flavors of Spain at Casa Armas

THIS NEW YEAR, let your friends and family enjoy the many sensory experiences reminiscent of Spain by opting for the "catering packages" and "holiday take-out" from Casa Armas. The restaurant, now well-known for its authentic Spanish cuisine and finest selection of Spanish wines, can eliminate the stress and time-consuming preparations by bringing the scrumptious array of your preferred food options right in your doorstep or office. With the Casa Armas Catering Solutions, you can look forward to enjoying great tasting Spanish cuisine with people who are dear or important to you. All you have to do is place the order in advance and let the Casa Armas catering specialists prepare a feast for you and your guests, after which you can take your sweet time to look your best on one's front and scow in style. Likewise, Casa Armas offers delectable "holiday take-out" options. For holiday catering, take-outs, reservations or feedback, call up Casa Armas at The Podium (G/F The Podium, 4CB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City; with tel. nos. 687-8860, 687-8870). Jupiter St., Bel-Air Makati City (892-3626), Greenbelt 3 (757-4666, 757-8861) and Wilkinson (833-0845).

New year, new start with Hallmark

START THE YEARS RIGHT BY carefully planning your days ahead of time. Get yourself a Hallmark 2009 Datebook. This little companion comes in a wide choice designs and is compact enough to fit in your pocket so you can bring it anytime, anywhere. Enjoy your favorite cup of coffee while jotting down all the important dates to remember and things to do with this cute little datebook that allows you to jot in later to all that matters to you. On the other hand, say goodbye to your boring desk by adding a Hallmark 2009 Desk Planner. With 2 handy designs to choose from, you can now mark all those special dates and occasions to remember in the most

fabulous way possible. Planning ahead has never been this fun. So what are you waiting for? Start the new year right and get yourself a Hallmark 2009 Datebook and Desk Planner. Hallmark 2009 Datebook and Desk Planner are exclusively distributed by Rida Distributors Corporation and can available at all Hallmark Book Store branches and other fine retail outlets nationwide.

WAKEBOARDING at the CWC@PHL Convention Ball

DOT, MTV Asia on a mission to lure more tourists to Philippines

With an eye on the growing market of youth adventure travelers, the Department of Tourism (DOT) recently partnered with MTV Asia and global interactive media network Media Contacts for a "hip, contemporary" global campaign to promote the country this year as a prime tourist destination for diving, wakeboarding, discovering Philippine wildlife and other active sports.

Communicating a Philippines that is "fun and with so much personality and liveliness," the DOT aims to ensure youth demand for local tourism in the years ahead through its partnership with MTV Asia, which will serve as the media platform for its promotion of local Philippine travel destinations.

Media Contacts Philippines, a joint venture between Wing! Corp. and Europe-based Starcom Worldle, will drive the "ground-breaking digital campaign" that MTV will promote worldwide.

"MTV knows its demographic best. Its VJs and onscreen personalities, for instance, have the credibility to reach out to the very same youth market we are targeting," said Tourism Secretary Ace Durano. He described the partnership as a "strategic fit" as 70 percent of the Philippines' tourists come from the Asia Pacific region.

More than targeting media impact, the DOT also wants to "ensure continuity of demand" as it engages the 15-22 year-old travelers in the campaign, Durano added.

MTV Asia focuses on a "roles-on approach" with platforms that are "largely ingrained in each local MTV's local language and culture," said Arati Jain, MTV Asia executive vice president and managing director.

MTV Asia's extensive network in the Asia-Pacific region covers Japan, China, Indonesia, and 8 other countries.

"We do not actually possess tourism. But Philippine tourism embodies what we stand for. Music and adventure travel are cutting-edge interests in youth, and we will put these together in this campaign," he added.

To support the global campaign online, Media Contacts Philippines will create "Pure-now Philippines," a digital community that will gather the experiences of various youth travelers. "We are also eyeing 20 maverick sites aimed to create curiosity for the country. There is a lot of hip, creative, unique content, aimed at fun in this country," said Media Contacts managing director Eduardo Mapa. This includes the Hook-a-pinas event that will top off the campaign and will be "a landmark in Philippine tourism."

Echoing here MTV "reflects youth passion" for more than 25 years, Mapa said "MTV will show how its magic works" by leveling its brand to give Philippine tourism a boost.

Business software for SMEs lays foundations for long-term growth

EVEN THE MOST CUTTING-edge business software comes across all the common threats—complex small and medium-sized enterprises. But it can catch.

When you consider that many of the labor issues being brought before the Department of Labor and Employment have to do with the inconsistent practices of industry, for instance, the case for a payroll program that incorporates key provisions of the Philippine Labor Code on wages increases, outright overtime, according to Claudio Fuentes, senior partner of Synthesis Innovations Inc.

Business solutions

The Information Technology and management specialist provider IT and business solutions for small- to medium-sized enterprises.

While most SMEs remember resorting to accounting software, they tend to be less accepting of programs that cover human resource functions like payroll and employee history and services, notes Fuentes, who also serves as a consultant to a number of SMEs engaged in manufacturing, semiconductors, services as well as establishments starting up businesses in the Philippines.

A study conducted by Synthesis Innovations shows that small business owners perceive such programs to be costly and fear that it would take a number of their time and effort to benefit from them.

Fortunately, a number of SME solutions developed by local programmers are seen in the market.

Synthesis' own Daily Time Record and Payroll Software has been distributed among SMEs in manufacturing, services, retail and other fields largely because its program includes provisions from the Philippine Labor Code on wage computations and even comes with a choice of manual log-in, barcode, biometrics or proximity system.

Fuentes observes that clients composed mostly of family-run business owners finding out that computerizing their payroll system frees them up for more important functions.

It use to take up to a day for one HR clerk to compute the wages of 20 employees working in excess of the mandated eight hours.

This is because overtime pay rates vary.

Employees pay higher overtime rates on a legal holiday, another rate for when a worker is asked to come in on his rest day, and still another rate when the overtime period happens to fall on both a legal holiday and a rest day for the employee.

The Synthesis software takes the chore of figuring out the confounding permutations for say, 200 employees on 12-hour shifts, in two days rather than two weeks if done manually. It will also compare the time-in from swipes, "which by the way is mandated by law," says Fuentes.

Lack of focus

According to Noel Sinclaire Sy, managing director of Synthesis, most small business owners are not focused on growing their enterprises. "In the end, they are content simply with earning a living from the business rather than laying the foundations for long-term growth."

Synthesis management software, which also offers programs covering human resource services, accounting, inventory management, e-commerce and point-of-sale among others, helps change that mind-set by incorporating best business practices.

Maximizing benefits

A complementary human resource management software developed by Synthesis, for instance, helps small business owners track employees' background, specialization, performance and exposure to ensure the right employee is deployed. A set menu of compensation will be handed to the experts after the seminar. For questions, call 630-79-35, 421-15-77, and 813-65-51.

ECHOtouch mentoring program launched

EDUCATORS' SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE Solutions ECHOtouch, a new mentoring program of public lectures and seminars focusing on the three principles the store stands for—the self, community enterprises and development and environmental issues. The monthly series, each one highlighting a theme, begins this month.

ECHOtouch debuts with lectures on angels, aromatherapy, and personal and environmental wellness. The lecture "Are you my angel?" is on Jan. 20, while "Having it all with your angel" will be held on Jan. 27.

These will be followed by talks on aromatherapy and personal and environmental wellness.

All seminars will be held at ECHOtore at the ground floor of Salcedo Plaza, Brothers Global City. All seminar fees are inclusive of snacks.

Call 892-8234447 or e-mail smp.sylvia@yahoo.com for reservations and details.

Seasif's biofuel program as an Asean model

THE PIONEERING EFFORTS OF SEASIF PHILippines Inc. in the development and commercial use of biofuels have been recognized as a model program for the Southeast Asian region, a ranking company executive said.

At the Ethanol and Biofuels Asia 2008 Conference in Singapore, Seasif vice president for supply Benito Raymundo pointed out that the company was instrumental in "changing the landscape of the Philippine fuel industry" as it handled massive challenges in introducing the use of alternative fuels to motorists.

"Being the first to launch biofuel, Seasif faced several issues challenges, such only in consulting and modifying its distribution system but also in complying with the up-to-date requirements of the implementing rules and regulations of the biofuels law, while addressing the resistance of motorists and their preference for conventional fuel," she said.

Seasif, the first independent oil firm to open a retail station after the deregulation of the Philippine oil industry in 1997, was the first to launch its ethanol-blended (E-1) gasoline to all of its filling stations nationwide in August 2006, more than a year before the Biofuels Act was signed into law.

Jetstar Asia voted best low-cost airline

JETSTAR ASIA HAS BEEN VOTED BEST LOW-cost airline at the 2008 World Airline Awards, based on a survey by SkyTrax, the global air transport research specialist.

The Singapore-based airline was also top of the rankings for Asia and Southeast Asia, the same awards it received in 2006.

Cheng Phei Lee, Jetstar Asia CEO said: "The Skytrax award is significant as it is an independent survey across 90 countries and over a team of more than 4 million passengers. We are pleased with the recognition and will continue to offer the best value, comfort and service reliability that are expected of us."

Jetstar Asia is a Singapore-owned company established in December 2004.

It flies to 14 destinations in 10 countries within five hours of Singapore.

Its regional operations include Jetstar Manila, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong, Macau, Kuala Lumpur, Siem Reap, Phnom Penh, Taipei and Yangon.

Its sister company, Valuair, flies to Bali, Jakarta, Medan and Surabaya.

Brands, ads to kick off ...

From page B/1

ume to back up its solid No. 1 position, may it continue to keep spending and decle up the market even more, including improving its mass affluent market advertising. After all, it goes back to its roots: 5 Stars.

DDB "Live Your Dreams" TVC: What do you always dream of? Why watch your dream go by? Whatever it is, dream on more because you can always "Live Your Dreams" in the Philippines.

Good proposition, with lots of possibilities for a long, sustained campaign. The execution is refreshing, for from the usual stuff you see in a generic tourism spot.

Too close

The music adds urgency to the commercial. It flirtsen with the chirping forest birds up in the sky and merges with colorful fishes under the sea. Given many media among many parsons will be borrowing it to no time.

May Ann Lendino, the Filipina artist who did the illustrations for this animated spot, should win a Caldecott, (the world's most prestigious children's book illustrator award, in case she publishes them).

Unfortunately, the ad's campaign theme is a tad close to Hong Kong's high profile "Live it, Love it" line. People do remember, remember?

Guessing that it is not entirely the same, they should veer many as from from the "Live it" line to the website, please. Or rescale the phrase a bit to make the idea as solid as it can be, and escape the tourist-side comparison.

The culinary white lady on the beach, transforming from hatches to reality looks a bit of a stretch. The "Big Bed" everyone is wishing for is also not left.

The Philippines is just a few hops away from three of the most engineering subsequent double-digit foreign arrival figures scenario. We are pretty sure there's a creative way to keep the tourists in and not bypass us. 2.5 Stars.

Point 8

Thank heavens for finally opening the first building people enter when they land in the Philippines. While we cannot have the grand spectacle of a Bangkok or Hong Kong international airport just yet, this one will suffice for now. No bad, but we deserve better.

Let it not be said that this is already it. As the world moves forward, we hope that we will, too.

Shut down "Obama" TVC in Ad Age

The hilarious TV ad has reached Ad Age New York, and most probably, circled the globe and reached the real US president. Knowing the ad chronicle's touch, it would also have caught the attention of Archibal Judges. Will this ad be another Philippine winner?

Will a sequel be forthcoming? A Pacin Olivarez meeting at the Rembin, a President GMA-China Premier Ioanna, perhaps? It is also interesting to know how the campaign is translating into actual sales and if people remember the brand name.

Agency: TBWA\ SMIT. BCDo Melvin Hinnigale and Marri Reyes; copywriter: Marri Reyes; art director: Dante Dacoy; production house: Revolver; cinematographer: J.A. Tadena; director: Ian Hunt.

Heard through the grapevine

An MD of an agency, sibling of a multi-national ad agency, has reportedly resigned up his duties and resigned his post. According to some, some boardroom tensions were felt prior to his exit. Like MDs of other ad agencies, he, too, had to deal with a big headache: figures that are tough to reach in a suddenly contracting world.

A colleague advises agency people to retrain from posting their work on popular social networking sites on the Net as they are easy pickings for rip-off artists.

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Advice for frustrated and fearful of the future (FFF)

LAST WEEK, IN "SHOULD THIS graduating marketing student live for his future?" MarketingRx published the letter of a graduating marketing student who, feeling that his four-year education will be inadequate for a marketing career, fears the for future.

Perhaps the same fear is felt by those who went unrelated to marketing from a different field. We see this all the time: Those in HR, sales, IT,—and even nursing, the arts and engineering are assigned to a management position [or are running a business] that requires coworking knowledge of marketing.

Learning fast

At for me (Dr. Ned Roberts), I had no plans to get into marketing. My initial career path was either law or journalism. Out of college, I started writing about business, entrepreneurship and health for a monthly lifestyle magazine. Soon, I found myself in a management position for the publisher of an international business magazine that asked me to market books to Asian managers (a new spin-off business of the publisher). I had to learn fast, since the previous manager I had replaced was gone and there was no turnover or formal training. The publisher had faith in me—or rather the fact that I was the son of the late Milton, the professor of international marketing at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM).

I remember doing several things to help me prepare for the position and the responsibility. These three daily "To Dos" also helped me when I started my business.

1. Seek mentors. I picked the brains of the best available executive person on marketing that was available to me—my Dad! The St. Jills-er and I consulted to work every day. The common term Pantayan (mink of Manila) to our respective offices in Makati became my "University of Manila Super Highway" with its Soc! Roberts as my professor. Thankfully, our offices were located within five minutes of each other. Were there was no skyway then, that were about three hours of marketing lessons with a marker to student ratio of 1:1. Pure heaven. I'd learn about my Dad's clients and the different challenges that they asked the St. MDs or to help them with. He may not have the blessings of having a marketing guru in your life, but you can certainly seek marketing mentors either in the company you work for or in you network. And, in the endless marketing associations and clubs that you have already joined.

Marketing mentor

I also considered my boss, Achoi Sudi, the publisher and president (I was his executive for when I had worked), as one of my marketing mentors as well. He was an encouraging influence who allowed his managers to be entrepreneurial. Mr. Sudi also introduced me to battle-trained marketing veterans who generously shared their experience.

While you're still in school, often to be the research assistant of marketing authors and consultants like PMA Agents Awardee Willy Arcilla and Karen de Asis.

2. Read. The best marketing mentors can be acquired for a few hundred or thousand pesos! 24/7 through the books and articles that they have written. Since I wandered books, I had access to the best and latest business books published by Harvard Business Press, McGraw-Hill, Pearson, Irwin, John Wiley, etc. Publishers would send me free review copies. Some days are crazy, but I still invest and budget a princely amount for books every year. I learned much from the classic career autobiographies of advertising legends, Lester Wunderman and Leo Burnett. When I started my business on a shoe-string budget, I consulted Guerrilla Marketing founder, Jay Levinson. Through his Guerrilla Marketing series of books covering such "Guerrilla Marketing for the (Home Based Business" counterpart with Seth Godin. Until I did I know that a decade later, I would be hosting Jay Levinson in Manila.)

Another book that I used to refer to a lot when I became an entrepreneur was Jeanie Gr's "The Marketing Plan" book.

Right now, I'm going through "Loyalty—the Three Secrets Revealed by the Worldwide CEO of Starbucks & Swatch), Kevin Roberts, to an inspiring, enjoyable read. Definitely designed about that decade what he has learned about brand marketing since he was in HKG in 1972.

3. Go back to "school." No, I know you've got graduation. You probably said to be out of school. But you need to go back and continually upgrade your knowledge. A management consultant once told me that the knowledge of a graduating IT student becomes obsolete just three to six months after they graduate. Given that the graduating marketing student's knowledge may have a shelf life, you still have to keep on upgrading and updating by attending "school."

So attend exciting edge seminars and conferences where the latest ideas and case studies in business and marketing are presented. Create your own curriculum. Allow me a shameless plug right here: Invest in the Inquirer Marketing workshops being offered through Jenish Go's Mastermith & Fielders in your "marketing school calendar."

Lastly, don't be quick to decide what you've learned at school—or how you've been exposed to the basics and have a good foundation. What's more important is what you stuff you've learned the discipline of hard work (learning that you are studying and working hard!) while still a student.

Once you get into a corporate marketing position fresh from college, the least wouldn't be careless and throw the weight of running a marketing campaign to a new hire.

Hard work, discipline

There will be a process of company "familiarization" ("What is how things are done around here"), orientation, and immersion. You'll have to learn fast on the job. The discipline of hard work that you hopefully learned in school will be your best friend. Hopefully you also learned how to work with different people and picked up people and leadership skills with all the group projects that were assigned to you in school. In business and the corporate world, you need to be able to work alone. You'll have to learn to work with different people.

We'll end with a reply from one of our readers who responded to last week's invitation to send their own experiences and words of advice to the MR Rx duo.

> In the corporate world, you won't go far if you work alone. You'll have to learn to work with different people

"Marketing is one of the most challenging jobs out there—precisely because it is very hard to deliver. Marketing usually does so many things all at the same time that it really is hard to create a textbook marketing marketing to endorse. ... What's importance is not what is in the textbooks but rather what have you really learned while in school, like how to network with other students, how to build an organization, how to learn the importance of teamwork in sports activities, how to court a girl and how to influence others—this is what's more important and this is what every student can use when they join the corporate world."—Jay Jaimenia, Consumer Business Development Director, PhilCom Marketing Philippines, Inc.

So, FFF, we hope that we answered two of the four questions that you asked last week ("what exciting marketing jobs could you suggest as a newbie like me which could be very helpful?" and "what else should I do that could supplement my education?").

Next week, the St. MRX-ers will answer the other two questions raised by FFF ("what am I to do about my dream without offending my professors?" and "could you please give me an idea of how it is to be a professional marketer and what the industry is like?")

Keep your questions and comments coming. Text us at 0918.634.6123 or e-mail them to MarketingRx@INQUIRER.net or post them at www.marketingrx.org.

INQUIRER

CANNES LIONS 2009

NOW OPEN FOR DELEGATE REGISTRATIONS

London, 8 January 2009 - Delegates wishing to attend the 56th International Advertising Festival, to be held in Cannes 21-27 June 2009, can register online at www.canneslions.com

Delegates can select a 3-day, 4-day, full week or full week with companion registration package, providing access to over 50 topical seminars, 25 all-creative workshops, screenings, exhibitions, 4 award ceremonies, 2 galas and the greatest networking opportunity the advertising industry has to offer.

Special Young Lion registration packages are also available for young creatives and NEW for this year, young marketers – young professionals in the fields of marketing and communication working for marketing organisations and client companies who also wish to benefit from the unique opportunity attending the Festival provides. Now in its third year, and going from strength to strength, is the student registration package.

"At the heart of Cannes Lions is creativity, the crucial differentiator for any business, especially those in the world of communications. With the current economic climate creating new issues to be addressed by the industry, those attending the Festival will have the unique opportunity to celebrate the best of global creativity, learn from their peers around the world, and help map the way forward for what we all know will be a year of change and challenge,' says Philip Thomas, Festival CEO.

Registered delegates can access information on a wide range of hotels, residences, serviced apartments and villas by viewing the Accommodation Guide featured on www.canneslions.com.

Entries open online Thursday 29th of January.

The 56th International Advertising Festival will be held 21-27 June 2009 in Cannes, France

The International Advertising Festival - Cannes Lions - is the largest gathering of worldwide advertising professionals and advertisers as well as the most prestigious annual advertising awards. More than 10,000 registered delegates from 84 countries and around 12,000 total visitors from the advertising and allied industries attend this event to celebrate the best of creativity across all media mix, discuss industry issues and network with one another. Over 28,000 ads from all over the world are showcased and judged at the Festival. Winning companies receive the highly coveted Lion trophy, honouring the most creative Film/cinema, print, outdoor, interactive, radio, design, sales promotion, integrated direct marketing, pr, well as the new media and direct marketing solutions. A unique programme of high-profile seminars, workshops and keynote speakers are also presented by some of the biggest names in the industry.

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All New City changes the rules in style and performance

01 January 2009 – Honda Cars Philippines, Inc. eagerly opens year 2009 and the rest of the automotive industry with the arrival of its highly anticipated model, the All-New Honda City, following the recent success of the new Jazz, the introduction of the 3rd generation City reinforces its claim in the passenger car segment.

The new City presents cutting-edge design and technologies that shall set new standards in it class. Starting refined and executive-looking features that are once reserved for luxury vehicles, the City vastly merges modernism with versatility to an ultimate driving experience. It simply changes the rules on how subcompacts should be here.

Its sleek design, which an extension from its design concept, the All-New City accentuates sleek and powerful shapes from any angle. It features streamlined grille, flanked-sized with sporting headlights, smoother contours and confidence that flows off to a lighter rear door and a 15" tire size to enhance its road-set appearance.

The new City makes its compact form, despite the increase in interior space. It order to maximize its maneuverability. Taking pleasure from its spacious interior, the City delivers a refreshing atmosphere marked with careful selection of design and materials. Honda takes the liberty to complement the City's refreshing as well premium sound quality. It comes with an advanced audio system that's compatible with iPod and also MP3 players via USB and AUX ports. Using four high-power 4½ inch speakers, digitally crisp and clear sound quality is enhanced.

The entry of the 3rd generation City completes Honda's 1.5 i-VTEC line-up. Sharing the same powerplant as the Jazz, the City is equipped with an i-VTEC engine technology that delivers maximum power output of 120ps at 6600 rpm and 134 nm at 4800 rpm for 1.5 liter i-VTEC engine. Additionally, the 1.5 liter i-VTEC engine intelligently delivers powerful and torque per fuel efficient driving performance by switching valve timing during operation and acceleration, then delays intake valve closure timing during cruising and other low load conditions. To further enhance fuel efficiency, the engine is also equipped with an automatic transmission to reduce engine revolution and stress. Delighted and easy matching of one's fuel consumption is now made possible with the fuel economy and range indicators available in the input cluster display of the instrument panel.

The 3rd generation City is the only one in its class to be equipped with an 11 inspired paddle shift (+ 5.0 only) to deliver superb driving experience. Also available in other models like the Jazz, Civic and the Accord, the paddle shift option gives drivers manual shifting of gears without the clutch.

Taking cue from Honda's fundamental values, Honda is ever committed in maximizing safety for its passengers. Just like any other Honda models, the new City comes with dual SRS airbags as standard, ensuring safety to every passenger. Just like any other Honda models, the new City comes with ABS with EBD and Brake Assist as standard equipment. Other safety features include Vehicle Stability Assist (VSA) System with Electronic Brake-force Distribution and Brake Assist are some standard in this new City. Meanwhile, dual SRS Airbags are available in E and i-DSI variants.

The new City is also environment friendly. It's new City's overall aerodynamic package changes the rules in its class, both in style and in performance. No wonder, the All-New City has made waves in neighboring Asian countries as it debuted in Thailand, India, Singapore, Malaysia, China and Indonesia. Aimed to be one of Honda's important global products, the new City is set to expand beyond Asia and Oceania and advance to the Middle East, Europe and Latin America.

Honda delivers 20,000 by introducing a model that shall play a significant role not just in the Philippine market but as well. As a testimony of Honda's confidence in local manufacturing operations and commitment to the Philippine government and Filipino people, the much anticipated City shall continue to be manufactured at our plant in Sta. Rosa, Laguna," said Mr. Atsushi Shimizu, President and Chief Executive Officer of Honda Cars Philippines, Inc.

Fast and emerging demand for automobiles in the Asian market brought about by the economic growth in the region set forth the birth of the City in 1996. Its success continued to grow with the second generation to augment the City's dominance with performance, comfort, quality and refinement. Introduced during the 1999 and VTEC engine transmission gear in 2003. Famous for being high in functionality features can now in multifunctional and fuel consumption, the City's one-of- value for money character gradually earned market leadership in the region that Asian market have spread out to Africa, Middle East and Europe, reaching a total of 39 countries around the globe.

The All-New City comes in four variants with introductory prices starting at:

1.3 iVtec A MT Php 670,000
1.3 iVtec S MT Php 715,000
1.5 iVtec E MT Php 754,000
1.5 iVtec E AT Php 804,000
1.5 iVtec S AT Php 808,000

It comes in a variety of colors:
Alabaster Silver Metallic (1 E S only)
Crystal Black
Habanero Red
Gold Mist
Brown Mist (1 E S and A)
Alabaster Silver (1 E S and A)

Starting today, the new City takes the time of Honda's 13 dealers in the country. Visit the nearest Honda dealer in Manila, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Pampanga, Cebu and Davao.

Visit www.cityhasgotthemoves.com and www.facebook.com/cityhasgotthemoves to see the new benchmark in compact and sophisticated motoring. Make an instant change with the All-New Honda City!

LIFESTYLE Fashion & Beauty

Contributing Editors: Ayalee Alberto-Sadhwani, Jamil Epperson and Ria Francisco-Prieto

Read her lips: Lipstick rocks

The formula that's worked since World War II is a good bet in these hard times

By Alee T. Vergara

IN A GLOBAL DEUIN, MOON confirmed what millions of women have already known through the ages: Lipstick, more than any makeup, has the near-magical ability to make a woman feel more confident and empowered especially in troubled times.

The study says women no longer consider lipstick a luxury. Leaving home without it, for a few respondents said, is almost akin to going naked.

And, as most Filipinas observed, the finer lipstick, the better they feel. This explains ruby Arcos's Lava Love, an oddball of the rock,

READ ON

Brush up on your brushes

Ria Francisco-Prieto

Clean them. And how old is your mascara?

STORY ON PAGE C2

Coming round this season

Imagine all the people— in sunglasses

HELLO, it's yellow!

LOOKS LIKE JOHN Lennon's legacy goes beyond music. Case in point, the forecast for this year's summer is all about round styles popularized in the '60s by the icon.

Round is definitely the shape of things to come. Oversized plastic-lens sunglasses were all the rage last year, and now comes the gigantic circles. Some believe the comeback of the round Lennon sunglasses is an off-shoot of the thick, plastic sunglass crowd.

Jenni J. Epperson

"We started to see round sunglasses to the trend-setters last summer, but they failed to make it beyond the eccentric celebrity and fashion-maiden types. (It's still the best way to hide from the paparazzi or even visual snipers.)

For Spring '09, however, the look is more than the random blip. Coming on the heels of the print- and sunglasses which dominated the past two years, round sunglasses are big again (literally).

TORTOISE more

And look like they've been to stay.

Round shades were all over the Spring '09 runways, especially in New York. Unlike oversized "It girl" frames or wayfarers, (popularized by Pixie Hilton, Nicole Richie and the Olsen twins), this season's eye accessories are mod round frames. They're on the runways of Ralph Lauren, Moschino, Dries Van Noten, Yohji Yamamoto and Stef Siemens. Carolina Herrera gave shades to her models at Mercedes Benz Spring 2009 Fashion Week, a favorite round pair in the classic specs of Proenza Schouler's Fall-Winter 2008/2009 collection. Their mirror versions have become every fashion magazine editor's personal pick.

Round frames, however, may not be as versatile as wayfarers, which flatter most faces. Round specs look good on small or long faces because the round-ness breaks up the length. They may not work too well on round faces, but then again, wear with confidence and spunk, it can be the essence of your look.

E-mail the author at fashion@gmail.com

METAL more

CIRCLE of sun

Brushing up on brushes

From page C1

TYING FLAWLESSLY SURPRISED to see mail in my cosmetics boxes address. The questions are really interesting. The great thing about skincare and makeup is they can also be conversation starters. These conversations can go on for hours—to the dismay of some guys. I guess makeup is to girls what cars are to guys.

Here are questions that crop up a lot.

How long does mascara keep?

The minute you open your mascara the clock begins to tick fast. To be safe, dump it after three months. Bacteria love to breed in damp places so make sure to clean your mascara tightly. Don't share your mood but you catch infection.

Are makeup brushes really important? What brushes should we have?

Yes, makeup brushes are very important. Brushes are made for specific areas and allow even application, which we know is key in having good makeup. Most makeup come with brushes but buying brushes for one's personal use is good investment.

Here are essential brushes:

1. Eyelid brush. This brush is small. It helps blend color and even the distribution of pigments.

2. Eyebrow brush. It looks like a tiny toothbrush. It helps put hair in shape and aids in fine and after plucking. You may tap this brush on dark-brown shadow to fill up spaces on brows if needed.

3. Eyelash brush. If you use mascara you will need this. It helps separate lashes after mascara application and takes away many-looking clumps.

4. Lip brush. Designed with fine bristles to apply lip gloss and lipstick. Use it for precise

LIP brush for precision

application, for shaping lips.

5. Shoe brush. This is the biggest brush that comes in the bristling shoe. It is used for powder base makeup to be applied on face and neck. This is great for illuminizers, loose powder application and soft sparklers. Brushes are normally made of waxed or thick cylindrical plastic.

6. Concealer brush. This tapered flat brush is used to hide skin flaws. Use flat-head brush for seamless application of concealer.

7. Blusher brush. This brush is soft and full to allow easily application on the apple of the cheeks.

How do I clean my makeup brushes?

Cleaning the brush is essential because dirty brushes can lead to infections. Don't share brushes. Cleaning the brush is easy. In a cup of lukewarm water, add a few drops of dishwashing soap. Swirl the brush several times in the solution until it's rid of makeup. Rinse the brush with tap water. In a clean towel, I gently press the water out. I put the brush to its original shape then leave to dry on a towel.

BLUSH brush for a great sweep

EYE shadow brush for blending

Get smooth, healthy tresses

BACK THEN, IT WAS BELIEVED that in order to get healthy, shiny hair it must be brushed a hundred times every night before going to bed. This no longer holds true as hair experts found out that excessive brushing and combing can actually be rough on hair.

Hair may seem impervious to all the brushing, heat styling and coloring we subject it to, but the fact is, every strand is delicate. The cuticle, its outer layer, is made of scales that overlap each other. Once the scales are disrupted, hair damage starts. And every time it will continue to chip and fray unless the surface becomes rough, dry and dull. Warning signs of hair damage include lack of elasticity, lighter-colored ends, split-ends and hair breakage.

Keeping hair healthy doesn't mean you completely stop styling it. You can take some measures to save it from further damage and give it some much-needed TLC.

ONE A MEDICATED

HEALTHY warm

COMB. Hair is at its weakest when it's wet, so detangling hair with a brush is a no-no. Try using a plastic or rubber wide-tooth comb instead.

Kelly Min, Stylist of the trade

as this is least likely to catch and break. Brushes built. When hair is almost dry, a natural or nylon bristled brush will style hair with minimal damage.

DON'T FORGET THE CONDITIONER. Regularly using a moisturizing conditioner will keep hair from drying out and make detangling a breeze. Brittany Ann, hairstylist for Kiehl's Stylist Series, recommends "using conditioner every time you shampoo, only every other day to give hair a smooth coat."

MIST A HEAT-PROTECTING SPRAY. Heat from blow-drying and flat or curling irons can generally reduce the hair's moisture content. Inevitably, what results from everyday heat styling are split ends and breakage. Spritzing a heat-protecting spray before styling can prevent the hair shaft from drying out and prevent your tresses from getting burnt. And when using irons on your hair, be on the safe side and do it only when it is completely dry. Otherwise, you end up seriously frying your hair.

STRAIGHT FROM THE SUN. Prolonged sun exposure can cause the hair's protein links to break down and worsen the damage, especially when mixed with chlorine or salt. Hitting a protective, nourishing spray before going under the sun can safeguard hair from extreme dryness. Another solution is to wear a hat.

HOT OIL TWICE A MONTH. "Hot oils never can be expensive, and can be done in the comfort of your home. Doing this twice a month will keep hair in good shape," recommends Jess Kincell (consumers are now available in local beauty specialty stores or drugstores. After applying the treatment on hair, soak a towel in a tub of hot water. Wring excess water from the towel and wrap it around your head and leave it for 15 to 20 minutes. This is an inexpensive way to keep your hair healthy and shiny.

SYNAGHT louise

Musical marks Cory's birthday

"CORY THE MUSICAL," MARKS THE BIRTHDAY of former president Cory Aquino in its final performances today and tomorrow, 8 p.m., at Meralco Theater. The Jan. 17 performance has been offered as a birthday gift at 50-percent discount to students and 20-percent to senior citizens. Call 921-3130/890-6000.

UST counselors' convention

The University of Santo Tomas (UST) Guidance and Counseling Department in cooperation with the Dominican Network (DomNet) is sponsoring a convention of the Guidance Counselors of DomNet member schools today and tomorrow at the Thomian Aquinas Research Complex Auditorium. Call 731-3148/688-1011 loc. 8310/516-1537.

Sichuan kids visit SM

A hundred kids from Sichuan, China will visit the ISM Science Discovery Center today, 2-4 p.m., as part of a tour organized by the office of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo together with the China Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs. The 130 children are staying in the country on tour other attractions until Jan. 17.

Club's 77th year

The Sin Hombre Club de Laguna Foundation will be formally incorporated tomorrow. It will host its 77th anniversary dinner ball at the Hotel Pavilion of Tagaytay Hotel. Presiding over the ceremonies will be foundation president Lorenzo Chavez and lady president Elizabeth Calvada-Candido. The foundation's muse, Patricia Florendo Olavidia, daughter of Dr. Bernard Dr. Melissa Olavidia will also be crowned at the event by Imelda Marcos and Dolo Aldi-Escudero. Highlight of the program is the "Ajaster de Honor."

Makeover for leftover

Stuck on what to do with leftovers and sick of eating it? Maya Kitchen shares tips in Leftover Makeover, Jan. 17, 3-6 p.m.

Basic Culinary is set Jan. 20-22, 9 a.m.- 2 p.m. Learn proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; nutrition and nutritional cooking; stocks, soups, sauces, marinades, use of herbs and spices-combinations; proper purchasing, storage, techniques of dismembering and boning poultry; filleting fish and meat fabrication, with actual preparation of dishes from appetizers, salads, eggs and pasta to seafood, poultry, meat and dessert. Attendees get a free cookbook.

Learn Basic Cake Decoration, Jan. 24 and 31, 9 a.m.- 3 p.m. Attend the lecture workshop on Fundamentals of Cake Decorating: Coloring, Icing (boiled, caramel, chocolate, sugar, simple fondant icing); Basic Borders, Jelly; Lettering and Basic Flowers including Bunching Techniques. Individual workshops on Icing Application and Cake Designing are also included with free decorating tips.

Attend the Catering Seminar on Jan. 24 and 31, 9 a.m.- 3 p.m. The seminar offers insight on the Legal and Technical Aspects of getting started in the catering business; Facilities; Personnel; Menu Planning; Costing; Preplanning and Recipe Standardization; Actual Preparation of Popular Low-Cost Dishes for Buffet; Docktails; Merienda Cena and Potluck Catering Service. Attendees get a free catering cookbook.

For inquiries, visit Maya Kitchen at (MT. Liberty Bldg., A. Arnaiz Ave. (Pasay Road), Makati City; call 892-1155/892-5011 loc. 166; e-mail contactus@thenayakitchen.com.

Free livelihood workshops

Starmall offers free livelihood workshops. Dessert Making is set Jan. 17 and Kakanin Making, Jan. 20 at 2/F, Activity Area of Starmall Edsa-Shaw. Dessert Making is set Jan. 24 at 3/F, Home Center of Starmall Alabang. Free workshops are also held outside the mall: Ladies' and Men's Accessories Making, Jan. 31, District 4, Manila; Household Cleaner and Car Shampoo Making, Jan. 24, Welfareville, Pasig; Dessert Making, Jan. 31, District 1, Manila. All seminars start at 1 p.m. Food and materials will be provided as well. Also catch Spices and Foodstock free food demo on Jan. 22, 2 p.m., at 3/F, Home Center of Starmall Alabang. Call 718-5467 (Starmall Shaw) and 842-2913 (Starmall Alabang).

Grand draw anniversary

Cherry Foodarama celebrates its 34th year with a grand draw dubbed "Catch the Fever, Win the Prize." Consumers get the chance to win the grand prize of a brand-new Chery Tig go or all its three branches — Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong City; Congressional Ave., Quezon City and Marcos Hwy., Antipolo City. Consumers prizes of 168 gift certificates worth P3,000 each or 56 per branch will be given away. Deadline for shopping entries is on Feb. 13, 9:30 p.m. The grand draw will be held Feb. 14.

UERMMC postgraduate course

The University of the East Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Medical Center (UERMMC) Department of Pediatrics will hold its 28th postgraduate course on Jan. 25 and 26 at 4/F Mandarin Oriental Suites, Gateway Mall, Araneta Center, Cubao, QC. Issues and concerns on critically-ill and special children will be tackled. Call 711-9464 (Doris Navarro) and 091-6864634; e-mail ror_pedia@yahoo.com.

Guitar endorser

Carlos Agassi is the new endorser of Cuba-made electric and undergarments. Cuban electric endorser and drummer for women and kids. Available at SM department stores, Isetann Metro Market Market and Metro Galleria in Cebu. Call 527-9580-83; e-mail guitarcop_1960@yahoo.com.

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†compared to previous Duck

Read her lips: Lipstick rocks

From page 1

AOM CRUZ, corporate communications manager; Faith Aranton, brand communications manager; Mary Gail Villafuerte, Avon representative; Bob Bridston, Avon Phils. president and general manager; Marissa Lim, Avon representative; Dolmyn Balgomis, Avon representative

...controls other lipstick shades, including the popular Pink Kiss.

According to its president and GM Bob Bridston, Avon Philippines will have no marketing threat as those findings in the world braces for tough times.

Despite the global downturn, with countless Filipinos to...gers of losing their jobs overseas (if they haven't already), Bridston said media there is "good news" for families, especially women, to supplement their incomes and even fulfill their dream of starting their own business with Avon.

LIM

Resilient

Avon has been through tough times. Established in California on the eve of the Great Depression, it has "survived" and even thrived during wars and economic and political upheavals in many of the 100 countries it's in, including the Philippines.

"In the US, Avon ladies sold war bonds while selling lipstick during World War II," said Bridston. "Whether in Russia, Brazil or the Philippines, Avon's decision to stay and weather a crisis has made us stronger. It gave us a competitive advantage over our competitors when they decided to come back."

Falling back has never been an option.

Russia is now one of Avon's top five markets in the world. Brazil grew into a billion-dollar company and the second biggest market for those products.

VILLAVIANE

BALAJADIA

Since establishing itself in the Philippines 20 years ago, Avon has emerged as the leading direct selling company and number one market in Asia including China, providing lucrative earning opportunities to around two women and men (children declared as several actual sales and manpower figures).

Self-made woman

Mary Gail Villafuerte, Manresa Lim and Godelyn Balagomis belong to such a group. From diverse backgrounds, the three are bound by a desire to provide for their families.

In less than five years, the three worked their way up to be sales leaders with hundreds of "downline" now doing the selling for them. Their common responsibility now is recruiting and training people.

They were able to build their dream houses and go on family holidays with their Avon earnings.

"Since I didn't have the chance to go to college, it's important for me to give my kids a good education," said Balagomis.

Three years ago, she was all set to try her luck abroad. A trip to an Avon store to buy makeup changed all that. Before she could even pay for her purchase, the store's sales leader convinced her to join Avon.

"Working for Avon has boosted my self-confidence," she said. "It emboldened my limitations and instead fostered in me potentials. What's important to them is the hard work I put in to meet my goals."

Villafuerte started selling Avon products in college to augment her allowance. She has yet to write a formal resume or do a job interview. A few months before graduation, while attending a sales conference, she decided to go full time with Avon.

"I saw how successful the sales leaders were. Why do I have to venture far when the opportunity was right there?"

Mom and daughter act

Villafuerte runs side-by-side to...since her husband is jobless. She exceeded her P1.3 million target last year; she sold P1.8 million-worth of Avon goods.

"I was able to buy a car and have our house built with my earnings. That's why I told my husband to quit going to Dubai. I'm glad he did. There's money to be made here."

With her mom being an entrepreneur, Avon sales leader herself, Lim grew up on Avon. But instead of following in her mom's footsteps, she became a nurse and started a family of her own. But sickness left her unfulfilled.

"I had to work long hours...counting other people's money," she said. "One day I came across a businessman-friend who had so much money. I had to stop and ask myself why I was doing this when I would very well want my own Avon business like my uncle."

Lim left the bank and has never looked back.

Bridston said they advise a growing number of customers-turned-sellers to tighten their belts, where's still a vast market waiting to be tapped. Besides, his is a well-known brand known for quality and breakthrough innovations.

"During hard times, consumers would still buy products they deem as necessities," he said. "What they wouldn't normally do is experiment by spending their hard-earned money on an unknown brand."

They would also probably go less to the mall and spend more time at home to avoid succumbing to "temptations."

"By taking the store to them, in the form of a brochure, our Avon representatives can still provide the temptation," said Bridston.

In these uncertain times, when a dab of lipstick can lift a woman's spirits, splurging once in a while to temptation may not be such a bad thing.

Zunic Success Story:

From size XL to medium

Featuring Ray A. Gapuz

THERE WAS A TIME when Ray A. Gapuz weighed 186 pounds, and was having an increasingly difficult time looking for shirts that could accommodate his 42-inch belly and size 12-13 XL frame. That was in 1997, and over the years, he tried different kinds of diets and made frequent visits to the gym. He would shed off the pounds, but within a short period of time, would gain all the weight back again. With no hands-on approach to business and various traveling engagements, he couldn't afford to be called away from his more pressing priorities. He couldn't afford the regularity that the diets and gym memberships required. So much that although his career was flourishing, it seemed that Ray was doomed to remain an XL size.

The Discovery of Zunic's Safe, Painless, and Scientifically-Based Treatments

Fast forward to November 2007. Ray comes across a newspaper article about Zunic, a new slimming facility which promised a safer, painless, and easier alternative to losing weight. He reads on, and is excited to learn that the methods and technologies employed by Zunic are based on scientific research done by reputable international institutions. Being a Psychiatric Nursing Major with an MA in Nursing plus an INCLEX U.S. #1 certification in hand, he was thrilled to know that Zunic incorporated medically-sound processes in their methodology. He submits, "With my medical field background, it was both comforting and comforting to see a slimming facility that was scientifically unselfish. I knew I had to give Zunic a try."

He immediately set a consultation session with Zunic's Makati Center and after meeting with trained medical staff to discuss his own personalized program, he scheduled his first treatment right away.

Presenting The New Ray A. Gapuz: After 11½ months with Zunic

Ten years into his battle with the bulge, this time, Ray was finally determined to shed off the extra weight. With the assurance that his treatments required no strenuous physical effort nor would produce visible results in as little as 45 minutes, and that all procedures were safe, non-invasive, and virtually painless, he made a commitment to never miss a session. Ray ogamito underwent a personalized combined regimen of Cryosurgery, Mesotherapy, Electrolipolysis, Endermologie, Pulsaire, Slimflow, Detoxwrap, and others. In weeks later, he had lost 33 pounds and was sporting a fabulous 32-inch waistline.

"Imagine the delight and surprise of my students, family and friends! Some colleagues couldn't believe that I lost so much weight without going under the knife and were convinced that I had liposuction. Short of taking my word off my phone them that I had no surgical scars whatsoever. I just shared them off and proudly said that this lovely was by Zunic!" laughs Ray. "So I recommended Zunic to all those non-believers so they could see for themselves."

"But above all, I, myself, was amazed. Zunic was able to fulfill everything they promised in my weight-loss goals were delivered within the timeline I specified. I felt absolutely no pain during my treatments and even by time my sessions were over, I lost around 2½ cm around my waist. Believe me, I measured it each time, and the results were immediately felt and seen. I always left Zunic feeling very good about myself."

True enough, everyone who has recently seen Ray A. Gapuz cannot help but comment on his complete transformation. From his original XL-sized 198-pound frame and 46-inch waistline, Ray is now a trim of 53 pounds and 11½ inches around the waist, and is now back within his normal BMI range of 1.93 pounds, shirt size: Medium, pants size: 32. Six painless weeks at Zunic achieved for Ray what two years of traditional weight loss methods could not. No doubt, when Ray walks back into his favorite shirt store, whatever clothing he wears to his liking will fit. After all, from no pack-to-find a fitting size 12-14 shirts, he is now a slim and sexy size L (and at times, medium). Zunic.

Visit Zunic today at any of their four branches for a free, confidential consultation. Zunic is open from 8 am to 8 pm, Monday to Sunday.

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Why Anton Huang is singing a happy tune

The Filipino didn't let Christmas pass him by

By Thelma Sioson San Juan

IN GLOBAL RETAIL, where almost everyone is in a financial mood, Anton Huang is singing a different tune—happy.

"Year 2008 wasn't bad. In fact, its second half was even better than the first, and we saw a double-digit growth from last year," says Huang, the executive vice president of Stores Specialists Inc. (SSI), the country's foremost and biggest luxury brand retailer, and of Rustan's Commercial Center, the leading high-end retail chain.

"People shopped for Christmas," Huang puts it simply.

Apparently, that's what many other local retailers also realized—with or poor. Filipinos just simply wouldn't let Christmas pass them by without gift-giving or celebrating. Week of Christmas, for instance, Rockfort High Street at The Fort was packed; restaurants saw good waiting time.)

"Sure, there's the pull of the purse strings, but in Filipinos, shoppers won the pull of the same strings," observes another retail executive.

"It was the average basket that grew last season," Huang explains. Say purchase of the average shopper in the SM and Rustan's stores. He means that each shopper bought more kinds of items last Christmas.

Proof of this good Christmas sales performance? Rustan's didn't have to go on sale even the holidays, going against the recession trend trend worldwide.

Huang is getting a mixed bag of reactions from retailers abroad. "The US and Japan are down, but Korea is up. It's a currency issue."

In general, however, retailers are "more hopeful of Asia," Huang says. "But it's a cautious outlook. They believe the strong will survive. Luxury brands will be more prudent in running the business, though consumers will not feel that at the level."

Last Christmas, Huang notes that Cartier's silver was "fabulous," and so were those of Mikimoto & Ippuzen, Tous and Bobochakas. Rustan's home, toiletries and children's merchandise also went well.

He explains the good performance: "It's Christmas, people celebrate. The pinch is not yet felt by life. Our customers, who tend to travel at this time, enjoyed (us) and about their stuff here."

People are staying in the country more and more, instead of shopping abroad—that's why the luxury brands are moving well.

"In difficult times, there's flight to better quality, craftsmanship and prestige," Huang says.

He also notes a critical factor: "What makes us different (from luxury retail abroad) is that 95 percent of our market is local, not tourist. In France, they're making retail more and more difficult to the local market (in anticipation of decreased tourist shopping in the recession)."

Huang's firm is "cautiously optimistic" about 2009, which he says, will be marshaled to brand expansion, brands refreshers, and even the speed in merchandise selection and assortment.

They will proceed with their plans for store openings and brand launches (Hermès, Jimmy Choo, for instance).

"One segment of the Philippine market is steady," Huang says.

A US retail economist said in the just concluded 90th annual convention of the National Retail Foundation in New York, "Consumer have the means to spend. They just don't have the will."

In the Philippines, adds we're not that sure if they have the means, consumers (high-end and middle market, at least) certainly have the will...still.

What began as fun is now the toast of world fashion

Her designs have been worn by Brooke Shields and Rihanna, and she has new accessories line for Ungaro. Paris-based Filipino designer is poised for bigger things in 2009

By Margo C. Enriquez
Contributor

BROOKE SHIELDS wore her striped, ribbon-inspired Hoosier in "Lipstick Jungle." Rihanna modeled her turquoise cross necklace and black belt for Instyle. This spring, this Filipino designer produced a limited collection of accessories for Emmanuel Ungaro.

He, Paris-based designer Rose Anne Co Unjieng de Pangalinan is modest and even secretive about her forays into fashion and would rather let her work speak for itself. Her fashion and accessory label parallels its elements from the ethnic fashions of countries in the Silk Road.

The designer spent the holidays with her family here and set up a trunk show for Marisa

A/ROSE D2

ROSE Anne Co Unjieng de Pangalinan born on rose

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PEPPER Tedcastles, Thai Airways cyber-smart marketing supervisor Web Dimitri, Pornlap Makornpan, Jason Petalver and Bulletin's Marlene Go

DENNIS Domingo, Jes Rez and John Ardee

RICKY Ree, mega architect Miguel Fusco, brilliant business personality Ben Chan and Lisa Ibarle

BUSINESSMAN Vicky Abbas is with friends, Ramon's super aunt Wanda Cooper Jr., People Asia's Joanne Rae Ramirez, Bong Gabriel, Dharma and Dennis Ramirez

Thai Airways hosts appreciation bash for clients, agents and media

THAI Airways' West Chairman Jean and crew, (center) Reina Dalla, Mars Ramos Ramirez and Tudor's Aimee San Diego

ROSEMARIE Cruz, Valerie Hoare and Frances Oliveiro

IT'S BEEN 46 YEARS, DARLING, SAID the author than flew us "seconds at sills" but boss greatly satisfying in tone of passengers. Said to show his appreciation, world-renowned Thai Airways International hosted a fantastic bash for its top corporate clients, travel agents, frequent flyers and members of the press at one of Forbes Manila's most exclusive clubs, Members Only, at The Fort in Taguig, yesterday.

"The pilot's crowning achievements and numerous milestones enabled it to become a world-class carrier in the air travel industry. It started its flights in March 1962 with two or three aircraft, of the national airline of the Kingdom of Thailand. Thai Airways International has known its incomparable services since its first flight. And I'm proud that the progressive visibility of Thai Airways in the Philippines allowed it to achieve its international target for the summer of 2008," Thai was the message of happy Nivat Guantanachot, the authorized general manager of Thai Airways in the Philippines, after the hosting and crowning of the perfectly chilled Heart of Chardonnay champagne by top star champion Champagne Morales.

Many of our town's hottest gathered to the music of The Angeles. The fun event ended with loads of giveaways like hotel accommodations and air tickets to Thailand, Bangkok, Phuket opinions included Tourism Authority of Thailand, Dusit Thani Hotel Manila, Dusit International Hotels and Resorts, its domestic Ralph's Wines and Spirits and yummy Mitsuru Bars ice cream, palangga.

Edgar Allan boutique inauguration

The 72 elegant dresses, cocktail and formal dresses were modeled before more than 900 invitees at the Alabang activity center of the newest mall in Ayala Alabang, Madrid. Ladies swooned during the inauguration of the Edgar Allan Boutique at the ultra-modern Glorietta 5 Ballroom. Basher's and Hotel Intercontinental along Ayala Avenue's, palang gas.

Well-respected designer Edgar Allan and merchandiser wife **Irene H. Tiongco**, longtime business collaborators and owners of Edgar Allan Boutique for 25 years now, have received their deep courage of selling out-of-a-kind dresses to their new store.

Among the fashionable crowd were Tony and Susan Yupangco, sisters Merry and Ninety Tiled, Angelica Romulo Tiongco. Rizal's mother was in the front row with pals from the media, Jolly Angeles Yao and Linda Kalaw, all environmentalist gone ca-

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH
Horace Arnaiz
Photo by Alex Van Hagen using **VKL** Photo Emotions

EVE Bulay-Javier, Cis Olivas Martinez, Bev Asare Javier and Edgar Allan, co-owner of the store, at the opening of their latest boutique

PRINCIPAL sponsors and guests of honor, banker Ruben Libayao (silver Edsel Tinsel and wearing scissors), Rep. Rachel Arenas, representing her mother, philanthropist Baby Arenas

DR. MARYSIA Reyes and Renee Payot

2nd WEEKLY WINNERS December 21-27.2008

AVAJA'S hottest executives: good-looking Ariel Fernandez, Chupa Bocar, VP and chief operating officer Ramona Tomeldan, Edgar Allan's business-wise and partner Irene Tiongco, and CJ Javier

MINARA gang: Fuller Life Direct Selling executives Percy Magat, president and managing director; Cherry McCarthy, marketing director; and Stephan Ghee, research and development director of Rappaport Biotechnology Group, who joined executives from The Netherlands just for this exciting launch, dahlings.

"Nirkara represents the most advanced product which fights skin aging in women and men. Regular use of this product results to smoother, younger and radiant skin," said Ghee.

The event's highlight was when Fuller Life introduced actors, equestrian and modiste Hilton Capuyagan-Arrocado to Nirkara's wonders.

Hilo, taking one look at Milton fit my Nirkara does work, palangga.

After the interesting presentation, Fuller Life stuffed-off Zoosolicus gift sets and excellent lunch at Cafe Mont atop mall. The Spa for revitalized massage and to experience Nirkara's wonders on anti-aging solutions.

Imagine, dahlings, if you look 30 or above, after 44 hours, you won't even have to go under the knife. Not bad, huh?

MELODY Yap, Fuller Life Direct Selling brand manager for skincare and fragrance

CINI Rivera, Fuller Life Direct Selling marketing manager for beauty

HILDA Capuyagan presides at the progressive Nirkara.

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What . . .

From page D1

the tones of Tina and Rizza Ocampo.

Whipped into and shit, Co Unjieng is dressed like a hippie version of a Judeo Oriente in Greece. Her raven hair is pulled back in crystal an oval liner with shot eyes and chiseled features. She is clad in a white lacy-crochet tunic set by Valentino, paired with cotton piqué capris. A satin bib embellished with turquoise, corals and pearls in circular patterns of her design makes a powerful statement. Shod in turquoise and leather dressy sandals, she says with a shrug that it's an old but timeless print of the same designer.

Speaking in a soft, husky sometimes whispery voice and puffing a drag, Co Unjieng doesn't take style too seriously. With her laptop, she wore a zipped, black pleated bag with brown leather trim, which is somehow her very functional. She recalls the curse of the "It" bag during a holiday last year when she also came home and brought a trunk show.

"With all these 'It' bags, it's irritating. All I want is a bag you could go around with. Last year I had one of those sequel bags. It didn't have a zipper, trying to be cute. I was in Milan! Marked vying to get money for my friend, a foreigner, from the money changer. She's neither here nor there. It was loaded with cash. I had people to pay like suppliers. When I reported it to the police, their eyes popped. Whenever aside is, let the jackpot," she says with a giggle. "I learned from that mistake."

Hot success has always followed Co Unjieng like a shadow. Last year, her home in the elegant district of Nuevilly was featured in the American edition of Elle Decor while her fashion line has been gaining recognition. Now she is poised to broadcast what began as a passion.

Fun pieces

"It started out for fun," recalls Co Unjieng. A longtime friend had a workshop in Nepal. Because of their closeness, it was inevitable that they would collaborate. On her Nepal trip, Co Unjieng designed a dress with painstakingly detailed embroidery and beadwork.

The top didn't fit well so she had the handwork stripped off. The outrage became the take-off for her collection of jewel-encrusted accessories which are mostly tied or strapped, and easy-fitting clothes and wraps. The woven patterns were inspired by the cultures along the Silk Trade routes such as Uzbekistan.

Where Co Unjieng were her creations, client followed. Accessories designer-entrepreneur Tina Ocampo was among her early admirers. Tina's husband likes urged her to produce a trunk show in the Philippines. Mix in Greenbelt 5 will carry her pieces.

"What gives value to the work is that the embroidery is undertaken by men in a moderate environment. The passivity vibe surrounded men privates details. Fabrics are hand-dyed, not produced here mills.

Ladies on the trunk show are requires like the ensemble camera worn from favorite colorants, a tie-dyed tonic top, beaded silk-cashmere trousers and wraps, duchesse embellished belts and necklaces with intricate floral and stellar patterns of stones and feathers.

Co Unjieng explains that she doesn't produce a regular collection.

"I'm not commercial yet. When you look at other people's works you see how cohesive it is. When I work, I always look at seven girlfriends in it' this or that girl can wear.

MORE IN

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What began as fun is now the toast . . .

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From page B1

Editor Bonnie G. Velarde

ENTERTAINMENT

Why Angel shed tears

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

ON LAST SUNDAY'S "MAD" ANGEL LOC-ito cried rather profusely while promoting her latest film, "Love Me Again: Land Down Under," with Piolo Pascual.

Could there be trouble between her and re-ali life love interests?

On "The Buzz" that same afternoon, Angel declined to elaborate, cryptically stating, "You can't have it all."

"All she let on was that it's a personal problem," Angel's manager, Becky Aguila, said.

Has Angel's steamy love scene with Piolo become a source of discord between the actress and Lito?

"He knows about it, but I didn't ask permission for it," she told "Buzz" host Boy Abunda. "I don't want to let my relationship if you have to worry about your every move."

Angel said they make it a point to give each other space. "I am proud of his achievements. I wouldn't hinder his growth. We support each other."

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Why Angel shed tears

Front page E1

Alessandra Joanné Angeli's statement puzzling because, in his interview with her "just a week ago, she said that's 13th personal happy abortion from life and career."

At the press gathering two days earlier for the same movie, Angel looked and sounded upbeat, gabbing candidly about Gab and their recent trip to Mexico with his mama Iloy Villasa Jimenez and stepfather Ralph Recto.

Thumbs up

"I look up to his mom and stepdad and it's good that I had the chance to spend time and bond with them," she said.

Last dad, Eric Fructuoso, for loves all 4 under-age for Angel, saying, "They look good together."

He added that "it's obvious that Gab had become 'more mature and responsible' because of Angel.

"I am thankful that they appreciate me," Angel noted. "I feel like some more very about them."

Eric now said that he'd not come a grandchild, courtesy of Angel and Gab.

"Problem is, we're not ready for that," Angel quipped.

Late Jimenez told the Inquirer via SMS on Sunday: "I don't know [what's going on]. I'm just sending her them so call and talk to me. I don't want to meddle."

E-mail: lopezinsidejuy@yahoo.com

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BEDTIME STORIES – SP 1:00, 3:20, 5:40, 8:00, 10:20	CHANGELING – R18 1:30, 4:30, 7:30, 10:30	BRIDE WARS – PG13 12:20, 2:30, 4:20, 6:20, 8:20, 10:20
LOVE ME AGAIN – PG13 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00	TRANSPORTER 3 – PG13 1:10, 3:10, 5:10, 8:10, 10:10	CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON – PG13 12:40, 4:00, 7:10, 10:00

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PROMENADE

1 LOVE ME AGAIN 2 3 BEDTIME STORIES 4 BRIDE WARS 5

WATCH SCREEN & MATCH PARING

MOVIE SCHEDULE

Director wanted . . .

Front page E4

drama that mixes terrible nasty and moments of intense joy. In finding a scene that's right out of Bollywood. This scene is unspeakably wonderously and inconsequent despite earlier moments of torture and cruelty.

Danny clutching his Golden Globe statuette backstage at The Beverly Hilton, told reporters, "They have this expression in India which says that when you do something, you should do it from the heart. The film was really made from the heart, every moment that we made it. We never expected to be here, obviously. It's incredible that we are. The fact that we're at Foreign Press Association, through these Golden Globe awards, gives us validation to present the film to the world. It is a platform for release in the world, including India on the 23rd. It is phenomenal to have this kind of validation from Hollywood. I don't know."

Extraordinary heart

Danny explained how difficult it was for him to turn off the cameras and leave Mumbai. The British director kept filming with an Indian crew long after his original crew had left India. "Thomas [Tuttoni, producer] shot the final scenes and had to ring us away," he continued. "Because the city, Mumbai—the enormous city, they call it—is a gift for a filmmaker. It is beyond everything you can imagine. The heroes, the terrible things you see. But there is also an extraordinary heart in the place, and with all this affliction, it is heading toward happiness. You can feel that. We've made it back to Bollywood. On the one hand, laziness, and on the other hand, music and dance, and it lifts your spirit. Hopefully, that spirit comes across in the film as well."

In the earlier interview, the filmmaker behind such films as "Trainspotting" and "28 Days" disclosed his strategy—"Set your shoot 10 crew members because I made a very big film (The Beach) in Thailand with a big crew. It is like surrounding us by what you take a big crew. You can't hide your mistakes. You suddenly survive like an army in town. I wanted that to go to more like how the inside to survived and take the discomfort away from the border."

Danny, who had no Indian co-director, Loveleen Tandon, explained, "For actors to walk the right attitude. I think they could tell we weren't going to make a disrespectful film and that we were going to make a genuine film that didn't hide anything but also celebrated the country and the spirit of the city. We constructed that to the people. They were helpful. We were there for ages and you know how film crews are as disruptive."

Engaging cast

As for his engaging cast of child actors, Danny said, "We found a couple of them from very poor backgrounds. They were wonderful to have around. We've put them in school. Then made such considerations to the film that you have to give something back to them. You can't just leave them. We've been careful setting it up so that if they stay in school until they are 16, you have means, class quite a big sum of money will be released to them. We put in place a structure that will benefit them in the long-term."

Of smiling Irish, India's movie legend, the Bhandaran who will surely walk on the Oscar red carpet next month, explained, "We met and he was nervous about working in English because he hadn't worked in English. Even though his English is perfect, he was nervous. He was impressed of the great actors who work in English. He looks at them big Hollywood stars and he doesn't want to step up."

E-mail the columnist at rvmartin_2000@yahoo.com and read his blog, "The Inquirer Report," at http://blogs.inquirer.net/inquirerreport

AT THE CINEMAS

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GLORIETTA 1	1 BEDTIME STORIES	2 BRIDE WARS	3 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON	4 LOVE ME AGAIN				
GLORIETTA 4	1 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON	2 HAUNTING OF MOLLY HARTLEY	3 BRIDE WARS					
	4 TRANSPORTER 3	5 BEDTIME STORIES	6 LOVE ME AGAIN	7 AND TAKSING WA NYONG LAKAT				
GREENBELT 1	1 BRIDE WARS		2 LOVE ME AGAIN					
GREENBELT 3	1 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON		2 BRIDE WARS					
	3 HAUNTING OF MOLLY HARTLEY	4 BEDTIME STORIES	5 LOVE ME AGAIN					
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 LOVE ME AGAIN		2 BRIDE WARS					
	3 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON	4 BEDTIME STORIES	5 HAUNTING OF MOLLY HARTLEY					
AYALA CENTER CINEMA	1 LOVE ME AGAIN	2 BEDTIME STORIES	3 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON	4 SEX DRIVE				
MARKET! MARKET!	1 LOVE ME AGAIN		2 AND TAKSING WA NYONG LAKAT					
	3 HAUNTING OF MOLLY HARTLEY	4 BRIDE WARS	5 LOVE ME AGAIN					
TRINOMA	1 AND TAKSING WA NYONG LAKAT	2 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON	3 BEDTIME STORIES	4 HAUNTING OF MOLLY HARTLEY				
	5 BRIDE WARS	6 LOVE ME AGAIN	7? LOVE ME AGAIN					

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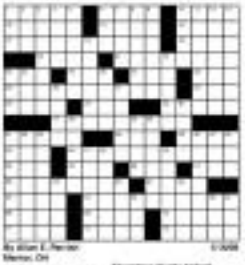

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

CONCEPTS SU DOKU

Concepts Sudoku By Dave Tilden

	5		2		4			
						6		4
	4				7			
6		4						2
			4	8	5			
1						8		7
			9				7	
8		1						
			5		2		9	

Difficulty Level ★★★★

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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

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Answer to previous puzzle

7	1	3	2	6	4	5	3	8
2	6	4	5	3	7	9	1	5
3	5	8	9	1	8	4	7	2
6	4	3	8	7	1	6	2	5
8	7	1	4	5	2	3	5	9
5	9	2	3	5	6	8	1	4
9	8	7	1	4	5	2	8	3
1	2	6	8	9	3	7	5	4
4	3	5	7	2	8	6	9	1

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"DIRECTOR Danny Boyle (wearing headphones, at a Mumbai train station): "Christian (Colson, producer) think the bank accounts and had to drag at set up because Mumbai—the maximum city, they said)—is a gift for a filmmaker. It is beyond everything you can imagine. The horrors, the terrible things you see. But there's also extraordinary hours in the place ..."

Director wanted to turn down 'Slumdog' at first

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD
Ruben V. Nepales

LOS ANGELES—"I WAS GOING TO turn the script down even without reading it," director Danny Boyle told us in an earlier interview about the "Slumdog Millionaire" screenplay of Simon Beaufoy. The project that Danny almost rejected is now seen as a major contender in the coming Academy awards after it dominated the Golden Globe Awards last Sunday.

Danny winner of the Best Director award, revealed, "I didn't want to make a film about Who Wants to be a Millionaire? I thought that nobody's going to watch that so that is not to be a proper filmmaker. I'm not going to make a film about that. But I read the script anyway because Simon Beaufoy wrote 'The Full Monty.' I thought I should read it out of respect for him. I was just 32, 33 pages in when I knew I was going to make it."

He said of Simon's script, which was liberally adapted from Vikas Swarup's "Q & A" novel, "Mumbai was like a—hunting on the page. I've been to New York in the '80s. That's the only place I can compare Mumbai to—that sense of electricity in the city. It's as if you're lured to Mumbai, you're insane. There's something seriously wrong with you. You need medical help because Mumbai is just alive. It's a wonderful city to make a film in. Simon's narrative was very clever in the way he wove the questions and answer structure back

> The movie is now seen as a major Oscar contender

and forward so we set off to make it."

"Slumdog" tells the tale of Jamal (Dev Patel), an 18-year-old orphan from Mumbai's slums who is close to winning a huge cash prize on India's version of "Who Wants ...," hosted by Prem Kumar (Anil Kapoor). The whole action is watching his saga on TV that when the show breaks for the night, the police raise and detain Jamal to—prior of cheating—how could a kid from the slums know so much?

Jamal's journey

At the police station, Jamal desperate to prove that he is innocent, narrates his adventures on the road with his brother, Israel brothers with gangs, and of Latika (Freida Pinto), the girl he loved and lost. Each compelling chapter of Jamal's tale somehow gives a hint to each of the answers in the game show's questions. A jaded police interrogator (Irrfan Khan) is intrigued by Jamal since the young man apparently is on the show not for the whopping prize of 20 million rupees. Millions of viewers are mesmerized by Jamal's journey. Will he return to answer the final question and will he get the correct answer?

Danny and Simon triumph, aided by a winning cast of Indian thespians, including stolen child actors, is that their executed a suspenseful, intense

DIRECTOR 02

LIVING Stars

Editor Erwina G. Velarde

Mexican families get houses funded by Mel Gibson

STARS FOR OTHERS

MORELIA, MEXICO—Mexican officials have presented victims of Hurricane Stan with 100 homes partly funded by a donation from filmmaker Mel Gibson. Gibson filmed his 2006 Mayan epic "Apocalypto" in the Gulf coast state of Veracruz. He donated $1 million to replace storm-damage homes in Veracruz and in neighboring Chiapas state. AP

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'Rock This'... he has a new book

NEW YORK—PASTMOUTH COMEDIAN Chris Rock is making a comeback as an author.

Grand Central Publishing says Rock's new book, not yet titled, will be full of "romantic observations." It's tentatively scheduled for release next year. His "Rock This!" was published in 1997.

Deb Haber, vice president and editor-in-chief of hardcovers at Grand Central Publishing, said in comments Tuesday: "We are so excited to be publishing Chris Rock ... He hasn't published a book in many years, so this one will be highly anticipated."

Rock, 43, was a featured voice in the "Bee Movie" and "Madagascar" films. He created the "Everybody Hates Chris" TV series and was the controversial host of the 2005 Oscars. AP

BOOTS ANSON-ROA

"SOMEBODYING Through Grief" by Kenneth C. Haugk is a set of four slim books that help grieving people cope in the first year of their loss. There are four parts: A Time to Grieve, Experiencing Grief, Finding Hope and Healing; and Befriending and Remembering. I'm on the fourth book. I like its message, that there's nothing wrong with crying ... that there's no prescribed period for grieving ... that you don't have to feel guilty if you recover quickly. A friend from Canada sent these books after my husband Pete died. Soon, I plan to pass on the gift of these books to Brenda Lorena Tolentino and Arcadelle Santiago Ondlow of Cebu, who also recently lost their husbands. Beyond San Diego, D.

CRYSTALLE HENARES

MY favorite book is called "The Bluebirding Classic: Positioning, How to be Seen and Heard in the Overcrowded Marketplace," by Al Ries and Jack Trout. I remember my dad (Atty. Heracio) saying he read this book when he was still taking up his masters. It's a 1980s book. It gives you great and applicable ideas on how to recognize and position yourself in the marketplace. It says that the battle ground is not in the market but in the minds of the consumers. It's a very practical book. Married 8, Grace

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10 ANG TANGING INA MYONG LAHAT

ERMITA

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METRO EAST

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4 THE CURIOUS CASE of BENJAMIN BUTTON
5 BEDTIME STORIES
6 TRANSPORTER 3
7 ANG TANGING INA MYONG LAHAT
8 LOVE ME AGAIN

NOVALICHES

1 LOVE ME AGAIN
2 BRIDE WARS
3 THE CURIOUS CASE of BENJAMIN BUTTON
4 BEDTIME STORIES

PIONEER

1 BEDTIME STORIES
2 HAUNTING of MOLLY HARTLEY
3 BRIDE WARS
4 LOVE ME AGAIN

STA. ROSA

1 LOVE ME AGAIN
2 FOUR CHRISTMASES
3 DAYO
4 MUTANT CHRONICLES

LIPA

1 LOVE ME AGAIN
2 ANG TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
3 BEDTIME STORIES
4 DAYO

DASMARINAS

1 LOVE ME AGAIN
2 BEDTIME STORIES
3 BRIDE WARS
4 DAYO

IMUS

1 LOVE ME AGAIN
2 BRIDE WARS
3 BEDTIME STORIES
4 TRANSPORTER 3

ANGELES

1 LOVE ME AGAIN
2 BEDTIME STORIES
3 PASSENGERS
4 FOUR CHRISTMASES

STARMILLS

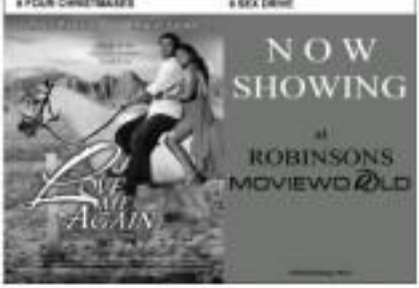
1 LOVE ME AGAIN
2 BEDTIME STORIES
3 ANG TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
4 DESPERADAS 2
5 SNAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL X
6 FOUR CHRISTMASES

BACOLOD

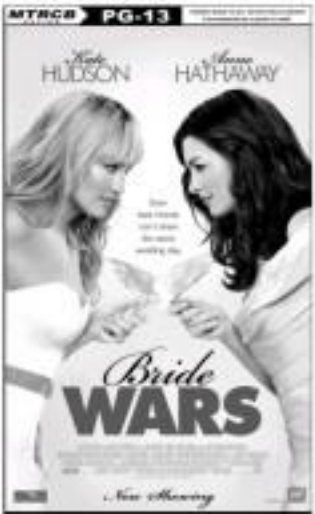
1 LOVE ME AGAIN
2 BEDTIME STORIES
3 ANG TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
4 TWILIGHT
5 PRIDE AND GLORY
6 FOUR CHRISTMASES

ILOILO

1 LOVE ME AGAIN
2 BEDTIME STORIES
3 THE CURIOUS CASE of BENJAMIN BUTTON
4 ANG TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
5 PASSENGERS
6 SEX DRIVE



14th Critics' Choice Awards in Sta. Monica, California



POOL goal is where Jayann does exercises, including diving in the water.

HOME BODY

Country girl at heart

Jayann Bautista, 'Pinoy Idol' runner-up, always goes home to her family in Pampanga

FRAMED articles on the Fab Four are part of dad's illustrious memorabilia.

DISPLAYED in the living room are crystals from Shangri-La mall.

CENSING musician figures are the siblings' gift to their music-loving father.

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos by Jim Geiss-Funston

MANILA, PAMPANGA—She's not just a little bit country ... she's also a whole lot rock 'n' roll.

She has her very own pad in Quezon City but Jayann Bautista, "Pinoy Idol" first runner-up, still goes home weekends to her family in Manila, Pampanga.

"I make the trip whenever I've free time," she said. "Hihi the new Northern Luzon Expressway, Manila is just a 45-minute drive from the GMA 7 studio in Quezon City," she told Living Stars.

Four lovs

She and her eight siblings grew up in this four-story home built 20 years ago and renovated in 2000.

"He didn't like a downtown. My dad took care of that," Jayann said.

Dad Jaime, a businessman and amateur interior designer, is partial to Chinese décor, pieces of which are displayed all over the residence; which has 10 bedrooms and a floor area of 1,200 square meters.

The jade and blue-and-white vases are from local antique stores, said mom Delia.

"My dad's favorite color is green," Jayann noted.

Mom said most of the pieces are from the Hong Kong Furniture Shop in Pampanga, and the crystal items from Shangri-La mall in Metro Manila. The nativity set is from the famous furniture-making town of Betis, Pampanga.

And built a state-of-the-art music room on the third floor, complete with sound-proofing, videoke projector, mixer and Tempo amplifier.

Also displayed in the music room is dad's collection of Beatles memorabilia.

Mom explained that Jayann also practiced singing while neck deep in the water of the cold pool on the second floor, it is Region 3 bluespan.

Almost quit

Obviously, Jayann takes music seriously. But there was a time she almost quit.

For four years, mom recalled, Jayann holed up in her room, after the disappointment of the talent show, "Search for a Star," where she was a semifinalist.

"All she did was cook all day," mom recounted.

Actually, that was her therapy.

The spiffy-looking area on the second floor is dubbed Jayann's Kitchen.

"She the only one allowed to cook there," said Jayann who mastered the stir-gang, lumpiang sariwa and adobo recipes of her Ilko Helen.

Most important

Like all artistas, she knows, talent is a buzz word's activity 24-7, is the most important reason for the Beatitude.

Jayann contemplated the kitchen's design as well.

Music, however, is her true calling.

She is currently working on her independently produced CD. "I hope to feature different types of music on my album. I want to showcase my versatility."

If she's not behind, it's because she goes up surrounded by music lovers.

All nine Bautista children sing—like their dad who used to be a band.

Since the Beatitude home is near the Sta. Maria Church, Jayann grew up listening to choral singing, too.

E-mail: bayanisandiego@hotmail.com

POSTER and ceramic figure are from dad Jaime's John Lennon collection.

DISPLAYED are the mini-mic's in her official "Pinoy Idol" audition primer.

CHEF She can cook in "Jayann's Kitchen," where she whips up singing duets here and other parties dishes.

My Jayann's room are her collections of stuffed toys and basketball memorabilia.

TV nook in her room has a 42-inch Samsung LCD set, sofa bed and mini-ref.

OPENING the French doors welcome guests.

DAD set up a mini-gym set in the patio.

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RICHARD GOMEZ

ALL OUR DOGS are child-friendly. Coke, a Labrador, is 3 years old. Hello, it runs between a German pointer and poodle, is 4. Lala, the Golden Retriever that Grace got Lucy, a 3-German, a French bulldog and the only male in the group, is 3. They are given hella fruits, since a month. They have their own food. I've always been a lover of dogs. I got my first dog, a poodle, when I was 6. She died of old age. My first Golden Retriever died of a heart stroke during one of my hunting trips. [illegible]. Grace